

# Reconciled Brother

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Summary: Trak Basamme is a shunned elite. Cain Johnson is a young human. Changing allegiances, gained and lost love and the tale of two brothers and the world they are born into. [COMPLETE]

## 1. I

### Reconciled Brother

#### Chapter 1 : Shunned, Scorned & Scared

The elegant Covenant ship glided swiftly through the cosmos towards its next target. Ship Master Ruis Basamme stood in the centre of the bridge looking over the expanse of holo-screens showing him the stars beyond the purple walls. The small planet they were headed for now filled the centre expanse of monitors. It was a unique, the prophets had said. The mighty Forerunner had given specific co-ordinates to this holy land, and Ruis had been given the honourable task of locating anything of importance. He was excited, for not only was this his chance to shine in the eyes of the mighty Gods and Prophets, but his third son was to accompany the warriors sent in. His son had failed combat school, something that deeply annoyed Ruis. He had been ridiculed by others, but now he had a chance to help his son reclaim some honour.

Deep below in the belly of the ship Trak Basamme was resting on his hard mat cleaning his new blue armour. Trak deeply resented his father, but even worse he resented the society he was born into. He did not like the way of the Covenant, he wanted his own destiny, his own choices in life. He did not want to be like his father, a mindless slave to the Prophets. But to speak his views out loud meant certain death, the volume determining the pain he would be put through before the final slice.

He was an anomaly, born with defects at birth and shunned ever since. His arms were much shorter than any of his brothers, yet considering his whole body was smaller than usual this did not matter. He was

already approaching the age of becoming a true warrior and yet he was only six feet tall. The most shocking 'defect' though was his mind. He did not carry the violent, senseless psyche of his kind. Trak was a careful thinker, more closely related to the scribes of Aribus than the Warriors of Sangheili. He did not care though; he knew his Great Journey lay outside of that of his brothers.

The orders came. The drop would be in twenty units. Trak followed his contingent into one of the many phantoms and awaited the battles to come. He held his plasma rifle in hand, his long fingers gently running over the smooth lines. His pistol was safely secured to his armour, next to a small box that held personal items. His team members gave him scornful faces as they secured themselves in next to him. Trak knew why they hated him so; they were a close nit team and he had been forced on them by his father.

The phantom rose from the deck. The others looked excited, Baj Lhib looked out over his troops. His eyes lingered for a moment on Trak and the lower mandibles twitched in annoyance. But he let his gaze continue and took a seat up on the opposite side to Trak.

The small vessel suddenly became weightless as it left the artificial gravity of the main craft, but soon the sheer velocity took over the strain. Trak felt his body being pushed against the cold metal suit. He did not like drops, even the training ones had resulted in him expelling his intestinal content. The ship became warm, then hot. The atmosphere of the planet whistled past, the sound violent, almost like a hundred souls screaming at death. Trak clutched at his stomach, the move jerky in the tight confines of the transport. The elite next to him turned his head and snarled at Trak.

After what seemed like an eternity the phantom levelled out and normal gravity returned. Trak breathed a sigh of relief, but he knew the battle had not even begun yet.

## 2. II

### Reconciled Brother

#### Chapter 2 : Deserter

Trak Basamme looked out over the city. It was nothing like home. No glittering skylines, beautiful structures and crystal lakes. No, this was a desolate place. The citizens had fled, all that remade was fear and those brave enough to stand and fight. The place was called Cote d' Azur by the humans.

Lhib moved forwards silently along the street. Each of his team taking up defensive positions around him. The goal was a large building in the centre of the city. Trak didn't even know why it was so important, he doubted if even his commander knew. Trak was pulled from his thoughts when a shot flew past his skull. A lone human fighter was holed up in a small building, firing wildly at the approaching enemies. Lhib turned to face Trak and motioned for him to move up, he wanted Trak to prove himself. Or die trying.

Trak cautiously began his approach, keeping to the side, out of the humans' field of fire. Bending his knees Trak moved below the small opening the human was using, he made a soft chirping sound. The human

quickly stuck his head out to see what had made the sound, it was all Trak needed. Grabbing the humans throat and pulling with all his might, Trak wrenched the human from the window and threw him to the floor. The male looked up at his assailant and for one fleeting second looked like he was about to beg for mercy. Instead he screamed at Trak and was quickly silenced. The young elite looked down at what he had done, the others coming forwards to secure the area. Lhib stepped up to Trak and laid one clawed hand on his shoulder. He had gained respect, but at what cost. Trak felt something stir deep within himself, he had never killed before and even though these humans were classed as infidels he still didn't feel right cleansing the galaxy of them.

The pale stoned building was up ahead. The wide empty plaza created the perfect kill zone for enemy soldiers. Trak watched as the spotter came back, his report filled with details concerning possible cover, enemy placements and anything else of note. It sounded as if the humans were using this place as their base of operations. They held it tight and everyone in the part knew they would not give it up without a fight. Lhib was thinking the same thing, a change of tactics was in order. The orders came quickly and for once Trak had confidence in his leader, this could work.

The unit powered up their invisibility systems and made their way across the plaza. They spread out and quickly entered the shadow of the huge structure. The humans were clearly visible through the windows. Loc Na and Turok made it to the wall first and silently began to ascend towards one of the numerous windows. The rest of the unit followed behind, almost all of them eager to let the human blood flow freely.

The hallway they entered was small compared to covenant standards, barely reaching ten feet. The camouflage suits began to fade and eventually the team flickered back into existence. Faint voices could be heard, alien dialects, they sounded agitated, stressed, fearful. Lhib took point and proceeded carefully down the narrow path. Plasma rifles were put away, stealth would keep them alive much longer than reckless heroics. Lhib looked curiously at the large wooden door, it did not open automatically for him and there was no control panel nearby, but then he remembered how primitive these humans were and looked at the crude handle bolted to the chunk of wood. He flicked his hand up motioned left, then right. The team took up flanking positions either side of the hallway using whatever lay around for cover. Lhib clicked his mandibles once, then silently turned the handle and slid open the door. Two humans stood inside, conversing in harsh tones, they had not even noticed the elite watching them from the side. Lhib gestured to Trak and Loc Na then drew one clawed finger across his neck, the meaning was simple. Loc Na moved up to the door first and withdrew a small metal blade, Trak doing the same behind. With a simple nod they both activated their recharged invisibility suits and crept into the room. Trak moved to the right side of the room, Loc Na took the other flank and tripped on the ornate rug. The human facing that direction looked up, a slight movement detected behind his colleague. It was now or never. Trak moved forwards simultaneously moving his blade across the curious mans throat, the warm red blood spraying free of its veins. He crumpled to the ground in a heap at the feet of his started companion. Loc Na was still on the ground, so Trak jumped forwards and embedded the knife in the mans throat, right up to the hilt. He felt the man gurgle in pain before pulling the blade free. Loc Na

came up in front of him surveying his work, expressions played across his face, embarrassment, shame and then finally gratitude. "You do the work of the Gods well for an anomaly," Loc Na finally said. Trak hung his head looking at his kill with his own eyes. He had killed three humans so far, more than any other member of his team. He had killed three humans so far, all in cold blood.

Lhib entered and smiled at Loc Na, "Good work Loc Na" he said in his cold voice. Loc Na simply bowed his head before looking up towards Trak.

"The honour was not mine Sir."

"Thenâ€¦| Trak, you have shown true skill this day. I commend you brother," replied the commander. He leaned forwards and knocked his helmet against Traks, a sign of friendship. Loc Na too came up and gave the gesture. Trak felt distraught. For so many years he had thought of been a Warrior as barbaric, but now he had made three kills without even thinking. And the people who had rejected him since birth were now accepting him with open arms. He had become what he hated most.

They proceeded through the rest of the upper story without any casualties. Trak held back and followed the rest of the group. He had been treated like an outsider since he was born and yet now, when he was treated like a brother, he felt the most alien. Lhib returned from the next door, it lead to the main hall below. The humans were numerous and spread out below. And it was not only military figures. Families inhabited the room. Lhib could not hold back his glee, there was much blood to be shed today. Trak glanced at his hands, they were dry, devoid of the usual slick lining. He was scared, not of the humans or his team, but of what he would have to do to stay alive.

The unit moved forwards, the camouflage once again concealing their movements. Trak hung back, he just could not bring himself to do this. The humans below started to fall, shouts and screams filled the air along with the trails of plasma. Trak stared down over the railings at the carnage below. It was mayhem, soldiers didn't know which way to fire, innocent civilians ran to protect their children and the laughter of the elites reigned over it all. Trak had finally had enough. With a strength he didn't know he had he launched himself over the metal bars and fell the full twelve feet onto one of his team members. Their cry was stifled as Traks hooved foot punctured the skull. Lhib turned to face Trak, his mandibles twitching wildly. Trak flicked his blade into his hand and threw it as hard as he could towards his commander. The blade ripped through Lhibs' lower mandibles and punctured the spinal column at the base of the head. He was dead before he hit the ground, his blood flowing freely from both the front and back of his skull.

Loc Na turned, stunned at what his new brother had done. Swinging his rifle around he opened up a barrage of super heated plasma. Trak dived but the plasma lashed against his side, searing away at metal and skin alike. He turned and unloaded his charged pistol at Loc Na. The impact burned through Loc Na, effectively vaporizing him in a heartbeat. By now the other elites had stopped their fighting to watch, but this gave the marines a chance to open fire. Armour piercing rounds tore through the elites, they slumped to the ground, there bodies still coming under fire. Eventually only Trak was left.

He did a slow 360 degrees turn and took in the situation. Over thirty humans still remained with weapons trained on him, their fingers itching to unleash death. Trak fell down to his knees and put his face in his hands.

He had committed mutiny. He had murdered his entire squad and brought shame to his family name. He would be captured, tortured and eventually executed to make an example of him. He was doomed. He had no future with the Covenant.

He was finally free.

### 3. III

#### Reconciled Brother

#### Chapter 3 : A New Hope

Trak raised his head slightly. The approaching humans formed a loose circle around him. Their weapons were still pointed at him. One man stepped forward, his waist stretched outward and he was obviously past his peak years. He looked around at the dead, Covenant and Human alike. He began to speak, Trak looked up taking in his face. He had studied the human language since he could read his own language. Their dialect was easier to learn than the Jackal form was.

"I suppose we have you to thank for saving us?" the man asked.

Trak dropped his gaze once again to the floor and answered in a low voice "I am ashamed at what I have done. Make my death quick and painless."

The humans stirred, they had never heard an elite speak their language before. "Stand up," the human commanded. Trak glanced nervously from side to side, then raised himself slowly to his full height. He wasn't even taller than some of the humans.

"You're different," he continued. "I'm not going to ask you why you did what you did. I'm just going to say this, thank you." Trak felt his lower mandibles drop, he never expected this. He felt death was as sure as the suns rising in the morning.

"You are both merciful and honourable, but why would you allow me to survive when so many of your kin has not?" Trak asked.

The man looked around again at the fallen when he heard this remark, but quickly looked back to the elite standing before him.

"What you did saved everyone left standing here, even though it could of cost you your life. I feel the least we can do is let you keep that."

A murmur of agreement ran around the circle at these words. A woman stepped forward, a small child held in her arms, "Thank you" she said quietly, "Thank you for saving my baby." Others began to step forwards, soon Trak was been applauded from every angle. His skin blossomed a deep orange and he fought to keep his smile hidden.

The first man stepped forward again though and the sounds died out,

"But you cannot stay here. It is too dangerous for both of us. Your kind will surely come looking for you, and if you stay with us then you will have spared us one time, only to condemn us another." He faltered, his gaze looking over the dead elites, "I'm sorry" he finally murmured.

Trak looked up and finally let his smile appear upon his face, "It is alright. You have given me something much more important than a home, you have given me hope. May we one day meet upon better circumstances. Farewell." Trak turned to face the main doors and slowly proceeded towards them. The crowd parted to let him pass, silent cheers and wishes following in his wake. The doors opened up before him and Trak stepped out into the glorious sunlight.

The city was just as he had left it before. Deserted, quiet, only this time Trak was on his own. Free from his team, the Covenant and his worries.

Beyond the city limits lay the vast expanses of woodland forests. It was a cool relief for Trak from the burning heat. He followed a large human road, always sticking to the trees, but not a single vehicle passed him. After several hours he lay down in a small clearing, his side ached from where the plasma had burned him. He had only basic medical equipment and proceeded to patch himself up. He lay back on the crisp grass and gazed up at the glorious blue sky. Trak pulled out one of his ration bars, it was made of a nutrient rich core surrounded by a layer of tasty skin. A thin layer. The whole thing reminded Trak of a sk'lip he had once eaten as a dare. The taste was bitter and lasted for a long time in his mouth.

Suddenly the sky blossomed a deep red. A cloud of dirty smoke rose high into the atmosphere and fell back upon itself creating a mushroom effect. Trak was hit by a shockwave that blew him back against one of the mighty trees. As the sounds of thunder fell Trak stepped out from the trees and his eyes fell upon the ruins of Cote d' Azur. It had been levelled, all life lost. But it had not been a Covenant weapon, no, it was one of the humans, one of their 'nukes'. Why would they destroy their own city?

But the answer came to Trak as quickly as it had arisen. The wrecked command ship laying across the human rubble showed why. The humans had sacrificed one city for one ship. Possible civilian losses for known enemy deaths. A smart, but desperate move Trak thought.

Trak knew he had to move on, the humans would surely come looking for any survivors. Gathering up his few items Trak went on his way again, always staying in sight of the road though now more hidden as regular patrols passed. Eventually he reached an intersection. The road was at least six lanes wide and the banks were half as wide again, clear of any cover. Trak checked his active camouflage system. It had been fried by the plasma, the inner workings fused into a mass of metal and fibre.

Trak checked both ways then began sprinting across the gap. Almost immediately a small four wheeled vehicle pulled out from one of the side roads. The humans inside were laughing jovially, obviously pleased with the destruction that had taken place. They stopped dead, the marine driving slamming on the brakes. Trak stood motionless in the middle of the road. The gunner of the small vehicle flexed his fingers on the grips of the mounted weapon. Trak looked down at what

weapons he had. The small blade was in Lhib's skull, his pistol was depleted and the single rifle he held had barely got enough charge to light, let alone the amount of damage it had sustained. Slowly Trak lowered himself to his knees and set the rifle down, the men's eyes following his every move.

Trak stood back up and stepped backwards. In as loud a voice as he could muster he shouted "I am not your enemy any more. Please let me pass and I will never disturb any human ever again."

The marines looked at each other and conversed in harsh whispers. The one manning the gun looked like he would like nothing better than to blast Trak's flesh out of his armour. The passenger though stared wonderingly at Trak. Trak kept his gaze neutral, for the next few moments these humans would decide his fate. Slowly the passenger got out of the vehicle and advanced towards the lone elite, carefully checking the forest sides for any sign of an ambush.

"Are you alone?" he finally asked when within range.

Trak nodded solemnly.

"What happened to you?" the man enquired.

Trak took a deep sigh and explained just how he had come to be here, the marine in the drivers seat looked up when he heard the story, for he had heard it before from some civilians retrieved from the old museum. The passenger looked at Trak after hearing this new information.

Finally he asked, "If we let you go, what will you do? Where will you go?"

Trak looked at the man graciously and replied, "I will begin a new life, far from any human. You will never hear of me again. You have my word."

The passenger returned to the vehicle and spoke once more to the marines. After a long time he came back.

"You can go free. We never saw you here alright. But if one civilian gets hurt or is killed we will come down on you so hard you will wish your team killed you."

Trak lowered his head in respect then strode into the forest. The humans were reasonable Trak thought. They did not accept him fully, but at least they did not persecute him.

The rest of Trak's journey was uneventful. He saw no more patrols and reached no more intersections. By now the dual suns were setting over a mountain range far in the distance. He would have to find shelter for the night, a place that was both safe from the elements and the humans for he could not explain himself when asleep. Eventually Trak selected a tall tree and nestled himself snugly in the branches, just like home he mused remembering times when he would hide out in the dense forests on his home planet.

The morning slowly awakened, but for Trak it felt like an entirely new world was beginning today. Suddenly a small cry echoed from the woods. Trak sat bolt upright trying to discern where the sound had

come from. He cautiously peered over the edge of the large branch he was on. A human was sitting on a rock below, its head in its hands. Trak moved slowly to get a better look at it, it had not heard him yet and Trak wanted to keep it that way. As he reached for a branch Trak lost his footing and fell down through the branches. He hit the ground hard, but the soft grass cushioned any serious damage. Trak rolled over onto his back and stared up at the sky. The cries had gone, there was silence and Trak was nervous. Warily Trak stood up and looked for the human. He was standing on the other side of the clearing looking at Trak. His expression changed, first he was scared, then shocked, finally his face hit on anger and he charged at Trak for all he was worth. Trak was not expecting this, this human couldn't of been older than he was and yet he was trying to charge Trak. Dodging to the right Trak avoided the initial blow, the boy spun around and began another blind assault. This time though Trak moved and tripped the boy at the same time. He went sprawling onto the grass and Trak was on him in a heartbeat.

"Please, listen to me," Trak pleaded, trying to make the boy understand just like the marines.

"I will not harm you. Please understand, I am not with the Covenant."

The boy simply spat at Traks face and squirmed as hard as he could to escape.

Trak let the boy go and jumped backwards, "There, you are free, you can leave, I will not hurt you." The boy stood, dazed at the elite before him. Trak stepped back slowly, eventually consumed by the thick forest, leaving the boy alone to wonder what the hell had happened.

Trak fell back against a tree trunk. He had sprinted away from they boy. There were three possible outcomes he thought to himself. The boy could simply forget about meeting the elite, he could pretend it was a dream and simply deny it to himself. Number two, he could come back alone to try and see the elite again. And last but not least he could bring soldiers. If he said he had been attacked they would come and kill Trak faster than he could spread his mandibles. He hoped to his ancient Gods that the boy did not choose the third option.

The rest of the day was spent hidden away in another tree that had a good view of the clearing. Trak mused over what could happen in the next few days. But then a new thought came into Traks mind. Why had the boy been crying, then attacked an elite? He should have been scared at least, but the anger was not born of desperation or fear, but raw hatred. For what Trak did not know.

The sound of approaching feet woke Trak from his restless sleep. It sounded like only one person but he was not about to find out the hard way. The boy appeared on the edge of the clearing looking around carefully, sure that the elite would be watching. He walked to the centre of the clearing and placed a small object on the rock he had been sitting on earlier.

As he walked away the boy said a single word to the night air, "Thank you."



#### 4. IV

### Reconciled Brother

#### Chapter 4 : Brothers Past and Future

Trak watched the boy move away and slowly the forest consumed him. After a long pause Trak slowly climbed down from the tree, with more grace this time. He made his way across the clearing to the rock and looked down at what the boy had left. It was a long rectangular bar, similar to one of his ration blocks. Carefully Trak picked it up and sniffed at it, it smelled unusual yet pleasing at the same time. He put it into his mandibles and bit down. Paper and foil squelched under his jaws and Trak pulled it out looking at the wrapping, how stupid, he had not removed it. The bar tasted much better now. It melted softly in his mouth and subdued the hunger in Traks stomach. For a while at least.

Trak lay back on his branch again, silently thanking the boy. Maybe he could show his gratitude later, if the boy came back. The night was dark and still. The wind flowed through the leaves like water. In the distance the rubble of the destroyed city stood as a monument to Traks past sins. He repented everything he had done, but maybe now he had a chance to repay it.

The morning light once again spilled onto Traks face. His side ached from being exposed for so long. The bandage had stopped the bleeding but it needed to be repaired soon. The morning dew made the grass wet and it crunched under foot as the boy returned once more. Trak was ready; he slid down the trunk and moved silently around the edge of the clearing. The boy reached the rock and looked at the missing bar, a smile wrapping around his face. He looked around slowly, speaking as he turned. "Please, come out. I want to know why you left. Please. I promise I won't do anything." He finally completed his 360 degrees turn and looked back at the rock, then Trak standing behind it. The boy jumped a bit, obviously surprised by Traks silent appearance, he recovered quickly though and moved towards the rock.

Trak too moved forwards. He held out the wrapper in his open hand and looked at the boy, "Thank you," he said slowly. The boy smiled briefly but still kept his distance.

"Why did you let me go?" he finally questioned.

Trak answered quickly, "Because I do not wish to shed any more human blood. I have left the Covenant and will not return to it. May I ask \_you\_ something?"

The boy looked even more shocked at this news, but hastily nodded to Trak.

"Why did you come back? Alone?"

It was the boys turn to answer and he took his time as if contemplating the consequences of his response, finally he said "Because you let me go. I had to know why. There was something different about you and I wanted to find out more. Do you understand what I'm trying to say elite?" Trak looked at himself, then back at the boy.

"I more than understand what you say, I feel the same way. My name is Trak Basamme and it is an honour to meet you human."

The boy looked Trak straight in the eyes, his pale blue ones contrasting to Traks deep black slits.

Finally he spoke, "My name is Cain."

"Cain," repeated Trak, he moved forwards and put one hand on Cain's shoulder.

Cain visibly flinched as the elite moved towards him, but stood his ground when the hand came down. Cain was nearly sixteen and the same height as the elite in front of him, he returned the gesture and then took a step backwards. Trak sat on the rock and looked at his new brother.

"How come you're different?" asked Cain looking down.

"I was born an anomaly. My egg did not properly develop, but the Prophets decried that I could live. It was my fathers idea to send me here. He said he wanted me to prove myself. But I know he wanted me to either succeed or fail."

"Whoa," replied Cain stunned by the harsh nature of Covenant society, "and I thought it was bad enough losing my parents."

"You have no parents?" questioned Trak. Cain looked hurt by this statement, it cut him deeply.

"They didn't make it out of the city. I don't know whether they were killed by your forces or the bomb. I was crying over them when you fell from that tree."

Trak looked away, he had never seen his mother and had hated his father since birth, but at least he knew they were alive. Losing parents that loved you must be much worse.

"I am sorry for your loss Cain" Trak said quietly. Cain hung his head and nodded slowly.

"So what are you going to do now?" he finally asked.

"I do not know. The covenant forces are leaving. Hopefully I will be able to stay on this planet. I hope to make peace with the humans here."

"Well you've already made peace with me," replied Cain with a small smile, "I can help you. If you want."

Trak looked out over his new brother, "You would really help me?"

Cain nodded then moved forwards, pulling his rucksack from off his shoulders. "Here have this," Cain said handing another chocolate bar to Trak. Trak took it gratefully and began eating it, after removing the wrapper this time.

"So where do you live?" asked Trak in between bites.

"There's a community shelter not too far from here. I'm staying there until I can find somewhere else. I don't have any relatives so I can't really go anywhere else. I'm taking it you live here?"

Trak nodded while finishing of his bar. "I promised that I would not go near human inhabited areas. I keep my word."

"What if you were invited?" ventured Cain.

Trak looked puzzled, what was Cain getting at.

"I mean, if I were to bring you back to town with me, would you come?" Cain asked.

Trak simply replied, "Why would I come?"

Cain looked at Trak, searching the dark eyes for any clue as to what the elite was thinking.

"What do you mean," he finally inquired, perplexed by the elites response.

"If I were to come back with you what would stop them from killing me on sight? And even if they did accept me, would they ever truly stop doubting my true intents?"

"You can't stay out here forever," argued Cain, "and if you did come back I would make sure nothing happened. You have my word."

Trak said nothing for a very long time. Cain just sat on the rock and stared at the elite.

After what seemed like an eternity Trak spoke up, "I just wanted to be treated like an equal. I hated my old life. The prophets, the commanders, my father. I've been given another chance and I don't want to squander it. Can you promise me my life?"

Cain thought for a moment before saying "No, your life is in your hands, not mine. I will protect you though."

Cain left some time later. Trak sat back in his tree thinking over what they had said. They had discussed human and covenant habits, what they thought was going to happen both in the war and on this planet and also on Cain's proposition. Cain was going to come back tomorrow, Trak had only a few units to decide what he was going to do. He could always hide, but what kind of life was that.

Then again he would live. Walking into a human town sounded like suicide. He was unarmed, with only a single boy who could just be leading him into a trap. But if the humans did accept him, eventually, he could join them.

Trak had to know. He had to know just what he was going to be walking into. Moving quickly through the night he followed the direction Cain had taken and soon came across a large town. Many buildings were damaged but lights were on in some of the buildings. Slowly circling the town Trak found the large gym Cain had talked about, he could hear movement inside. Scaling the walls he peered in from one of the high windows and saw hundreds of humans inside, all on small beds, slowly sleeping.

Returning to the ground Trak let out a slow sigh. The humans here seemed peaceful. Maybe Cain could pull off his offer. A bush rustled on the other side of the town, Trak caught it with his better hearing. He put it down to the wind at first, but then feeling no breeze at all in the still night cautiously moved forwards.

The bushes moved again, more violently this time. Two low-lying shrubs parted and moved aside. Trak hid behind a small vehicle to watch. He saw the unmistakable flicker of an invisibility cloak. The Covenant had not left. And they hadn't sided with the humans either.

Trak lay back against the cool metal of the vehicle. The Covenant had come to this town, for him or the humans he did not know. But one thing was for sure, he had to protect them. Flexing his fingers he silently moved around the town behind the warriors. They did not hear him as he got closer and closer to them. They were spread out loosely, Trak watching them by their flickering outlines. One warrior was staying behind, the rear guard. Trak moved cautiously behind the lone warrior. Springing forwards he wrapped one hand around the elites neck, cutting off any chance of shouting for help. Using his other hand for leverage he twisted the elites head and heard the reassuring crack of the spinal cord. He gently took the elites weight and moved him over into the bushes. Taking the camouflage unit first Trak looked over the body. The former warrior carried two rifles and four plasma grenades, but Trak found his favourite weapon, the small blade. Activating the camouflage he fell in behind the others. Within minutes he had taken out another but just as he was going to fulfil his third kill, to balance his kills of humans, another elite turned around. Trak was caught mid motion, the elite he was about to impale spinning around and striking Trak to the ground. Trak had no choice, he pulled up both of his rifles and let the blinding plasma fly into the air passing through the elite on its way. The rest of the team turned to face Trak but he was already moving away laying down suppressing fire as he retreated.

Shouts were heard from the buildings, doors slamming open and men rushing around. Trak knew he could not be seen by either force, he was on no mans land. Peeking out from beside the corner of a building Trak looked for the others, his active camouflage was slowly recharging, he had to survive for at least another minute. Looking up he calculated the building to be no more than two stories high, child's play he thought as he scaled it with ease. Looking down over the edge Trak saw three warriors standing below also waiting for their camouflage to recharge. Taking in a deep breath Trak jumped and spun in the air. He landed on the knees of one warrior shattering them downwards. Spinning he slashed the soldiers throat. The other two turned and opened fire but Trak dived. The plasma splashed against the two warriors, their own weapons killing each other. Trak slowly came back and looked down on the dying elites. One moved towards its weapon, Trak kicked the rifle away and then kicked the elite in the face. It rolled over and did not move again. Restocking his weapons Trak moved on, there would be more to fight.

From the far side of the town a cry went out, not in anguish but in pain. It was cut short, the sound a horrible choking gurgle. Trak moved quickly to the source of the sound. A man lay on the ground his projectile weapon lying next to him covered in red blood. Trak turned away from the site and looked around. The elites must have moved on.

Thinking quickly Trak had a good idea where they would go, the most populated area, somewhere the humans could not run. They were going to the gym. To the women and children. To Cain.

The gym was just up ahead, its tall walls stretching up into the darkness of the sky. Every shadow cast a place to hide, a place death could lurk. Trak watched closely, the elites had to be here somewhere. One of the small windows at the top of the walls slowly opened, then another and another. They were going in. And so was Trak.

He leaped up the wall, a full ten feet in the air. He caught the bottom lip of the window and threw himself in. His active camouflage engaged and he quickly scanned the room. Nothing stirred. Suddenly bodies began to scream and fall. Plasma erupted and the carnage began. Trak took up aim and shot two of the elites dead within a minute. Slipping out his blade he began searching for anymore. The camouflage was beginning to fail, both Traks and the warriors. A gold elite came into view and Trak faltered. It was time to prove himself.

A blue elite came up behind Trak. Trak simply threw him over his head and impaled the blade in its eye. Pulling it out he wiped the purple blood on his armour, his eyes still set firmly on the gold elite. Faj Zhuy stared angrily at the elite before him. He knew who it was, Trak Basamme, he had slayed his entire team. And now he had almost obliterated Fajs. Snarling his deep voice Zhuy brought out his plasma sword and ignited it, the fiery glow reflected in Traks deep eyes. Trak ran at Zhuy and jumped clear over his head. He had to take this fight outside where the humans would not get hurt.

Standing before the doors Trak turned and faced the elite, "Fight me if you dare. Your team were weak. They must of got it from you!" The insult worked, Zhuy's face became even more twisted, he roared and charged after Trak.

Trak bolted through the doors and kept on running, the gold elite right behind him. He was slower, Trak knew that. Soon he could feel the gold elite right behind him. He corrected his path and jumped. Hitting a large pole with a light attached Trak jumped again and spun over the elites head. Sticking out his knife Trak drew a deep line across Faj's helmet. Rolling from the impact Trak quickly picked himself up again to face the elite.

The residents of the town came out, spilling from many buildings to watch the battle. Some still held weapons but did not shoot, they didn't know what was going on. Cain pushed his way to the front of the crowds and gasped in horror when he saw what was happening. He instantly recognised his new friend. "Trak!" he shouted out. Trak spun at the sound of his name, he spotted Cain, but his monetary lapse of concentration gave the elite enough time to lunge forwards and drive his sword through Trak's stomach. Trak crumpled to the ground, the warrior standing over him sneering. Cain looked on in horror at what he had done, and then shouted again "Shoot him! The gold one! Now!" Even though he was fifteen his orders were obeyed. Faj came under fire from a barrage of weapons. His armour shattered and purple blood blossomed from his skin. Within seconds he was gone.

Cain ran forwards, dropping to his knees by his brother.

"Oh my God," he muttered looking at the wound. It had not fully punctured Trak, only seared away at the side, re-opening Traks old wound.

Trak gazed deeply at Cain, "I guessâ€¦ I couldn'tâ€¦ waitâ€¦ to get here." Trak slowly said, drawing each breath painfully.

Looking up Cain shouted "Somebody get a doctor," but no one moved.

"Why!" one man questioned, "he's one of them. Why should we help him!"

Cain stood up and looked to the crowds, "He just saved all of you! And now you're going to let him die! You are worse than the Covenant! And he is NOT one of them. He told me!"

A ripple of talk went around the crowds. A woman ran forwards, a small bag in her arms, she looked down at the dying elite, obviously disgusted, before helping him.

Trak looked up at the night sky. The voices were getting further away, a woman's most prominent. Before his gaze left this world Cain leaned over him, "It's gonna be alright Trak, I promise" he said.

Trak smiled, then fell unconscious.

## 5. V

### Reconciled Brother

#### Chapter 5 : Born Again

The darkness was absolute. Trak felt nothing and everything at once. Was this the Great Journey he pondered, the thoughts swelling around his head. Distant vibrations echoed in his mind, then went quiet.

Once more Trak fell into the abyss.

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Cain looked at his friend lying on the cold metal table. Trak had stirred once, but then fallen back into a deep sleep. The guards by the door had stiffened, but did not bring their weapons to bear. The elite lying on the table was neither friend nor foe.

Cain held his head in his hands for it was he who had caused this. Trak could of easily won that fight, he had pulled of some amazing moves and once again saved people he did not know. But at what cost? Last time he said he had escaped with a burn to his side, this time it was much worse and Cain knew it. He sighed and stood up, he had been at Traks side for over two days solid. The doctor did the best she could, but her knowledge of elites was limited. The local people talked about Trak, Cain knew they did. Some thought he must be a spy sent to infiltrate them, others believed him to be a criminal running from the Covenant. Cain didn't care what they thought though, he knew

Trak.

Security had been stepped up in the local town. Guards patrolled only in threes and sensors lined the entire perimeter. They would not be taken by surprise again. Cain wanted to become a soldier, to defend his people, to fight back against the Covenant. He could understand Traks resentment to violence, but was startled by his ability in combat. The elite had performed moves he had never seen before. No way could he have failed combat school thought Cain, unless he did it on purpose.

Walking outside for the first time in days Cain was taken back by the sun that shone brightly in the sky. It was a perfect, peaceful day. The local people walked between buildings, children laughed and played, and guards stood watch on every corner. Walking into the gym Cain saw it had been cleared of death. The floor was clean, the bodies removed. The night mats had been stacked against the far wall, many tables replacing them. The room was half full when Cain entered, the talk cheerful. As soon as Cain stepped forwards though it died down, all eyes turned to face him and he felt his cheeks flush. Moving towards the dinner counter Cain received a meagre meal of chips and beans before turning around to face the people. Silently Cain walked towards the far corner and sat down alone facing the wall with the many eyes behind him. Sighing to himself he picked up his knife and fork and began to eat his meal. Slowly the talk returned, quietly at first, but eventually returning to normal levels. This time though there was no laughter, it was harsh discussion and Cain had a good idea about what.

Cain heard footsteps behind him, a slight cough and then a mans voice, "Did you know that covie'?" he asked quietly. Cain gently put his knife and fork down. Without turning around he replied, "He's my friend. And he isn't with the Covenant." Cain heard the man sigh and turned round to face him. He was shocked, it was Captain Harrison, the highest-ranking man in town, Cain looked up into his face. He seemed tired, almost at his wits end. "Some of the folk around here claim he must be that hero elite from Azur. Do you know if he is?" the old man asked quietly, Cain nodded and looked around at the hall. They were all watching the discussion now. "Sir, I understand you want to know as much as possible, but not now. Please, just wait until Trak is better, then ask him yourself." The captain looked down at Cain, his face set in stone, "You really think he's gonna survive?" he asked finally. "I promised him he would" Cain replied, turning back to his meal. After a short pause the captains boots clinked away on the floor and Cain was once again left alone.

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The darkness fell away once more. Trak felt more alive with each passing moment. The world outside was bright, the light flooding through his eyelids. His mandibles flexed and he sucked in a deep breath. His side ached, it seemed as the air was on fire, consuming his skin. Twitching from the pain he heard movement, he was not alone. A faint voice carried across the room to him, alien, human voices. Trak opened his eyes slowly taking in the immediate view. The walls were white, the ceiling was white, this must be a medical facility thought Trak. A person came into view, a young female human. She leaned over Trak and looked at his side, she jumped when Trak reached out for her. "Whereâ€¦ Where isâ€¦ Cain?" he asked painfully. She looked at him, then nodded to one of the two guards standing

motionless by the doors. They hurried out of the room. "He's coming," she said soothingly, "just relax. You went through an awful ordeal." "Is Faj dead?" he asked slowly. "Faj? You must mean the gold elite. He was blown to pieces as soon as you were clear," she replied, "Thank you for saving us," she said before moving away.

The door opened and Cain came rushing in, he jumped to his friends' side and looked at him in the eye. "You're alright man, you're gonna make it, I promised." He smiled deeply at Trak, "You're the talk of the town Trak. You're a true hero now." Trak returned the smile and moved slightly to get rid of some of the pain. "I am sorry for coming to the town. I know you said you wanted me to come with you, but I was curious." Cain looked at his brother, his eyes full of gratitude. "If you had stayed we would be dead Trak. Including me. Everyone here owes you their life." "I was not good enough to save everyone," Trak replied quietly. Cain stood silently, he could not imagine the pain Trak was going through, both mentally and physically. "You still did more than any man here," he finally said. Trak smiled gently at his friend before lying down, "I have killed three humans. I could save your entire race and still not have paid back my sins." "But you're on your way," Cain slowly whispered as Trak fell into another deep sleep.

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The following days progressed very slowly. Trak regained much of his health, but the wound he had taken was still very sore. The doctor would not let him out of the infirmary, as much for his health as the captain's orders. He could now sit up on the table and was becoming increasingly restless. He had nothing to do all day except rest, the one thing his mind would not do. Could not do.

Cain came to visit everyday for hours on end. He would just sit next to Trak and talk about what was happening in the outside world. Trak had tried to get to know the guards coming to his room, but they didn't seem very friendly. The doctor had said they were there as much for the towns' protection as his, but Trak knew the truth. No one trusted him yet.

It had been almost a week since the fight and Trak was sitting on his bed reading a small book Cain had brought for him. It was a story of a man who has born into a powerful society, but resented its ways. He freed the oppressed people and lead them to a better life. The mans name was Moses. Trak liked the tale, it was full of hope, triumph over evil, but most of all it reminded him of the Covenant. He was rebelling against them, maybe he could help the humans. Maybe he could lead a few of them to freedom. Maybe was a very big word.

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The guard shifted restlessly on his feet. He was alone today, the guard lowered. He was also new and wasn't comfortable with the idea of being left alone with an elite, even an ex-covenant one. He looked away when Trak gazed at him. "Why do you hate me so human?" questioned Trak, curious to know the answer. "It's just, well, you're an elite." "And?" continued Trak. "Since I was young I've heard stories of you single headedly taking out whole squads of marines, massacring civilians, butchering us. I saw you fight that gold elite. You moved better than any elite I've ever seen or even heard of. I'm



just not sure if I can accept you've changed sides. I believe you in my heart, but my mind will always see you as a threat." "I'll tell you something human. I would do exactly the same thing." The guard smiled and looked at Trak.

The doors slid open and captain Harrison walked in accompanied by two other soldiers. The guard by the door saluted the captain then stepped back to the door. Trak warily stood and saluted the captain with his bandaged hand. The captain returned the gesture before standing at ease in front of the elite. Trak slowly sat back down, carefully placing his book on the nearby table. "How are you feeling?" asked the captain looking at the bandages around Trak's chest. "My health improves with each day sir. I will be fit enough to leave you all in peace soon." "Excuse me" said the captain, "You're going to leave?" "Surely you don't want something like me around for long. I know how you feel about me. I am an unwanted burden on this town." "Son, you saved everyone in this town. You can stay as long as you want. You're a guest and if anyone gives you any stick I'll deal with the accordingly." The captain looked at the elite with a gleam in his eye. "I do not know what this stick is, but thank you captain. I am most grateful." The captain chuckled at the remark, but lightly patting Trak on the arm he smiled and turned to leave. "What will happen if more of my kind come sir?" Trak blurted out, unable to hide his fear. "We'll give 'em hell son, we'll give 'em hell."

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The days turned to weeks. The weeks to months. Trak was released from the small hospital after over two and a half months of care. As he walked down the steps into the main street cheers erupted from the crowds standing outside. It seemed the entire town had come out to see the elite. Trak grinned and waved back to the people. Cain was at his side, he led him down the steps and across the main road. A supply room in the main gym had been cleared out and made into a habitable space for Trak. The room was small, Trak's head nearly brushed the ceiling, but it was much better than any cabin he had ever had to live in before. Turning around he saw Cain look nervously at the room, then Trak. "It's not much, but," "It's perfect" finished Trak. Cain smiled wider and left Trak alone in his new home.

Trak carefully sat on the small bed in the corner, testing it for his weight, but as he was not much bigger than most humans he had no serious worries. It felt wonderful, the mattress was soft and springy and the blankets smooth and obviously clean. A far cry from what Trak was used to. Trak began unclipping his armour, the doctor had not or could not remove, so Trak had been enclosed in it for what felt like forever. Carefully setting down the pieces he took another long look around the room. A small table sat next to the bed with a light on it. There were no windows, instead someone had placed large posters on all the walls, shots of the greatest places humanity knew. Trak felt a pang of guilt, almost certainly half of these places no longer existed.

The door swung open and a soldier entered, he stared at Trak for a while looking embarrassed. "Yes?" Trak finally questioned, curious as to the intrusion. "Erm, Captain Harrison would like to, erm, meet you. I'm to take you there now." "Thank you," replied Trak, noting that the marine did not move. "Can I ask you something?" the man continued. "You just did," Trak said back, "but you can ask me

again." "What's it like? In the Covenant?" Trak thought a moment about the question, "Honour without purpose, belief beyond knowledge." The man looked genuinely puzzled at Traks statement but smiled after a moment. "So, are we going?" asked Trak standing up. "What about your armour?" enquired the soldier. "It is for fighting. Should I need it?" replied Trak. The man looked embarrassed once again, but quickly regained himself, "No, of course not. I just thought you, you know, lived in it." "Just because you have only ever seen elites in armour, does not mean it is the only thing they wear." "I know, dumb question." The man turned and walked out of the room, Trak following close behind.

People turned to watch the pair move across the gym. Some gasped at seeing the elite without his armour, but others felt more re-assured. It showed the creature behind the metal. Moving outside they quickly followed the road to the Town Hall, Captain Harrison's base of operations. Traks escort saluted the two guards in front before moving inside, Trak gave them a small nod and followed. Quickly turning to the right the escort began to ascend the curving staircase, Trak following silently. Eventually they reached a double set of large oak doors. The man knocked twice and stuck his head in, "Sir, the elite here to see you." A voice answered from inside and the escort lead Trak in before leaving. The captain sat behind a large desk made from the same wood as the doors. His high backed chair swivelled and he turned to face Trak. Trak stiffened and saluted the captain, not removing his hand until the captain had finished his return gesture. Standing rigidly Trak looked straight ahead, long hours of training at school had taught him misbehaviour here resulted in severe punishment. The captain looked at the elite a long time before finally saying "Sit down, you're not on god dam parade here." Trak glanced at the captain stunned at how he could dishonour rules like this.

"Iâ€¦ I am sorry sir. It is just custom for me." Trak replied.

"Well as long you're here you don't need to act like every move will result in your death. I heard that's what it's like in the Covenant."

"You heard right," Trak answered.

The captain pulled out two small glasses from his desk and a bottle of amber liquid. He poured some of the liquid into each glass and handed one to Trak. Trak looked at it quizzically, smelling the odour it gave off. "Well go on then, try it," said the captain watching.

Trak put the small glass to his lower mandibles and carefully poured a small amount down his throat. It burnt and seared as it travelled down, leaving a sickly after taste all the way. Trak coughed and choked on the vile substance. The captain grinned watching the elite, "Can't take it eh?" he asked smiling.

Trak looked up.

"It wasâ€¦ very nice sir," he finally responded in between gags.

"I said you didn't have to always be good," the captain replied smirking.

"It tasted worse than my ritual juice. What is it sir?"

"This? This here is ninety year old, matured, whisky. Ain't no finer liquor in space."

Trak grinned. "I know some people who would disagree with you. Where I come from that would be considered a warm-up."

The captain laughed jovially and looked at the elite. Eventually he sighed into his glass and looked back up at the elite.

"So, to the business at hand," he finally said.

Trak returned his face to a neutral expression and gazed at the captain.

"I suppose my first question is what do you want to do Trak?"

Looking down at his bare hands Trak finally answered, "What ever you want me to do sir."

The captain looked almost angry and Trak became nervous. "No kid, I mean what do you want to do. Not want you feel you should do, but what your heart tells you to."

Trak took a long time thinking over what he could say. He had two main choices, stay or leave. The latter would put him in harms way, every human or covenant would try to kill him. But the first would be almost as hard. Eventually he looked into the captains eyes and spoke his answer. "If you would keep me, I would like to stay here. I would work for my keep. You wouldn't even know I was here," Trak finished with a small grin.

The captain smiled back, "No chance of that," he said calmly, "But I think we can work something out. You've proven yourself loyal at least twice, it's the least we owe you." Trak broke into a wide grin and stood in front of the captain. "I thank you from the bottom of my soul captain. You are an honourable man. I promise, on my Gods, that I will serve you well." The captain stood and placed his hand in Traks. "Welcome to New Lyon Trak. You're now an honorary citizen." Trak felt his heart lift as he left the room and returned to the gym. He had been accepted. The humans liked him.

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The celebration feast for Trak was in full swing and Trak sat on a table with Cain and his girlfriend Rachael. "I told you this town would love you," Cain said in between mouthfuls of meat. Rachael smiled at Trak and took one of his hands in hers, "Welcome," she said slowly. Cain reaching over plucked her away from him, laughing he said "Go find your own girl, mate." Trak grinned and pulled the fizzy liquid towards him. Taking a small sip he felt the bubbles in his throat, he liked this liquid. Cain and Rachael stood up and moved to the dance floor. Trak did not join them, he knew very few Covenant dances, let alone human ones.

He was shocked then when a human girl came up behind him, she must have been the same age as Rachael. She cleared her throat, a signal Trak knew humans used to ask for attention. Slowly he turned to face

her fully. She was very beautiful by human standards. Her long dark hair flowed freely down her back and her face was very soft, her deep brown eyes full of innocence. She bit at her lip and opened her mouth slightly, Trak was at a loss for what to do, he had never seen a human act like this. Eventually she drew in a deep breath and said quietly, "Hi, my name's Hannah. Would you like to come and dance with me?" Trak was taken aback. This human female wanting to dance with him! For a single moment he considered rejecting her, but he knew that would harm her deeply. Instead he lowered his head slightly and spoke in a quiet whisper, "I do not know any human dances." She smiled gently and stroked his long hands, "It's alright, I'll show you. Just follow my moves." Trak stood slowly and followed her onto the dance floor.

Carefully she placed one of his hands around her waist and another on her shoulder. Doing the same she led him gently around telling him where to place his feet and what to do. Cain sailed past with Rachael, both smiling at them, Cain more so. The dance seemed to go on forever, but Trak did not mind. Hannah was a very good teacher and soon he could dance as well as her.

As the last song came on she leaned closer to Trak, he could feel her warmth on his cold body. She smiled gently at him, looking into his eyes. Trak smiled back at her. Ever so slowly she moved forwards and kissed him on his cheek. Trak felt the blood rush through his body, his mind raced with fireworks and his heart thumped in his chest. Hannah moved back and smiled once more at Trak.

"It was wonderful dancing with you Trak," she said slowly. Trak gulped deeply trying to keep his emotions down, "I had an excellent teacher," he replied. As the music died down and the towns folk began to leave Hannah left Trak and followed Rachael out of the hall. Cain came sauntering over smirking at his brother, "I reckon you're in with a chance there mate," he said. Trak elbowed him in the arm, but smiled as well. "What do you mean, she's a human and I'm, I'm not!" "One of us now," Cain finished. Trak hung his head and watched as Hannah disappeared through the door. She was staying in the old library, not in the gym. Cain looked at his brother, unsure as to what he was thinking. "Do you. Do you think a human could ever, ever love something like me?" Trak asked slowly. Cain looked at the door and waved at Rachael, "Mate, I think Hannah's proof enough."

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Trak retired to his small room. Lying on the comfortable mattress he stared longingly at the ceiling. Cain's words echoed through Trak's mind. For a long time Trak simply lay in the darkness thinking of things that could and couldn't be. As his eyelids slowly closed Trak realised that it did not matter what you were, it's what's inside that matters.

## 6. VI

### Reconciled Brother

### Chapter 6 : Training

The morning brought with it new hope for Trak. He rose early and silently left the gym. No one else had stirred this early, many were

sleeping of the ill effects of consuming too much alcohol. Slowly moving to the edge of the town Trak began to climb his favourite tree. It was the tallest around, with clear views of the surrounding areas. Trak felt alive at the top, no one could touch him.

Far below the door to the make shift marines barracks opened and three men walked out. They were laughing loudly, Trak could barely make out what they were saying. His ears perked when he thought he heard his name. A new chorus of laughter rang out. Were they mocking him he thought?

Slowly the town came to life. Babies cries echoed out, soon the doors opened and people began filing out of buildings, some to enter another, other just wandered about. The sun had risen over the hills now, it's fiery red glow illuminating the town. Trak tried to identify the different people. He knew a lot of people now, too many he thought. Trying to remember the different names would be hard.

-

Cain awoke groggily. His head hurt, the booze ebbing away, giving rise to a killer hangover. Standing up slowly he stretched his arms, trying to retain some of his strength. Moving to the restrooms he stood in line, how he longed for a proper home. He noticed Traks door was shut, he was probably asleep still. Cain didn't want to intrude so after visiting the toilet Cain simply returned to his mat and got changed.

Stepping into the fresh air Cain took a deep breath and let it out slowly. Setting off at a quick jog Cain followed the edge of the town. He had been cooped up for too long watching over Trak, now he was finally able to exercise stale muscles. He began to speed up, the sweat pouring of his face already. Panting he heard heavy footsteps approaching behind, probably another morning jogger. When he saw the elite catching up Cain smiled.

"You got up late," Cain said in between breaths.

"I have been awake since the first light, you are the late one," Trak replied.

Cain sped up trying to test the elite, Trak easily caught him up.

"Is this the fastest your legs can carry you? I am the slowest of all my family and I can still beat you."

"Shut up," laughed Cain bumping into Trak. Pushing him back Trak looked at the town passing by.

"Do you miss your parents?" Trak asked slowly. Cain slowed down and stopped, bending over trying to get more air into his lungs.

"Every night," he finally whispered.

"I'm sorry," whispered Trak. Cain stood up straight and looked at Trak, "Stop saying sorry," laughed Cain, "You'd bloody apologise for us turning from apes to humans. I swear if you say sorry again I'll, I'llâ€¦"

"What?" said Trak laughing at his friend, "You and your weak little human arms."

Cain jumped at Trak, his face a wide smile. Trak was ready though, he moved sideways and tripped Cain, just like that first day so many months ago. Cain rolled and sprung back up.

Moving forwards he put his hands into a fighting position and faced Trak, "Come on," he said grinning, "take me if you think you're better than me."

Trak came closer, raising his fists as well.

"I do not wish to hurt you Cain," Trak spoke.

"'Cus you're a coward?" Cain provoked, "come on, I can handle it."

Trak struck once, gently and knocked Cain's arm. Acting as though nothing had happened Cain jabbed his right fist at Trak hitting him square in the chest. Trak staggered backwards, not expecting such a hard blow. Cain circled around Trak and came up behind, preparing to kick the elite. Trak spun and caught the leg at the last moment. Cain looked up at Trak's face, the smile evident. Pushing his hands up Trak flipped Cain onto his back. Cain fell hard onto the dirt path, coughing he slowly began to lift himself up.

Trak's hands appeared in his view, holding on gratefully he allowed himself to be pulled up. Not letting go Cain yanked the hand towards him and tried to turn, but Trak bent his arm so that the elbow could not bend. Then retrieving his hand Trak spun Cain in front of him and moved his arm up to the boy's throat.

"I failed combat school," Trak whispered in his ear, "that doesn't mean I didn't learn how to fight."

Cain lifted his right leg upwards and shot it back into the elite's shin. Trak released his grip and hobbled to face the human.

"You fight well," Trak said.

"Not as good as you though," Trak said looking at his brother.

"I could teach you. If you wanted of course."

Cain's determined face broke into a smile, "Really? You could teach me how to do that stuff?"

Trak's face split into an evil looking grin, "Only if you can beat me though."

Cain's face fell, he looked distraught. Moving forwards he slowly said "but Trak, how the hell could I beat youuuuuuuu." Jumping straight for Trak, Cain took the elite down by the knees and pinned him to the ground. Trak grunted in surprise.

"Good enough for ya'" he said with glee.

"Cheater," huffed Trak, pushing Cain off his chest.

His smile shone through though and the two walked slowly back to town, using each other for support.

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Cain and Trak stood in the small clearing where they first met. Cain had his hands up in front of him, one facing palm forwards, the other level. Just as Trak had taught him, the lessons beginning to show in how Cain held himself. Slowly following the movements of the elite next to him Cain slowly pulled his level hand backwards, covering it with his other hand. "C' jip" shouted Trak.

Cain shot his hand forwards, twisting the covering hand upwards to distract an imaginary enemy. Reeling his hand backwards Cain looked at Trak nervously, "Very good," Trak said slowly watching Cain sigh audibly.

They continued the practices for over four hours that afternoon. Trak teaching Cain harder and harder moves until Cain could master them all. But Cain could not complete one. It was Traks best move, but only because his Commander had performed it on him when he failed to get it right first time. Trak knew Cain could perform the move well, he was just scared of injuring someone, namely Trak.

The move called for Cain to lunge at his enemy, at the last moment they had to spin on their right leg, bending it so they passed under the arm of the enemy. Rising up behind they continued the move in one fluid motion, drawing a blade across the enemies throat before ducking back under the second arm to deliver the knock out blow. Trak could perform the move blindfolded on a high commander, but that was only because he wanted to, he wanted to kill the commander.

Cain looked at the small blade in his hand. It was wooden, carved out of a log by Trak using a real blade. The edges were blunted and the tip rounded off, it couldn't even hurt a suckling thought Trak smiling at Cain's nervousness.

"Chicken?" said Trak, using the humans previous insults against him.

Trak looked up, a wicked grin spreading across his face. Jumping forwards he managed to land on his right leg and spun downwards in one swift move. Coming up behind Trak though Cain lost his balance and toppled right over onto his back.

"Maybe we should leave that move for when you have a proper enemy," Trak said lifting his brother of the ground.

"If I don't learn it now, when I come to use it on any enemy I'll just fall flat on my butt," Cain replied, angry at himself. Trak grinned at Cain's honesty.

So they practiced it again and again. Until Cain had mastered the move and Trak felt he was ready. Now Cain could truly test out his newly acquired skills.

Trak moved up in front on Cain and held his hands at the ready. "You attack first, I will defend," Trak spoke out, "to give you a chance."

Cain stood fully, stretched his muscles and slowly placed himself into position. Taking in a deep breath Cain stared at Traks eyes before rushing forwards. But it was not the clumsy move Cain had used so many times before, now he moved with a purpose, he swung and dodged as he came closer, Trak struggling to judge where he would hit first.

Cain pulled his right fist back and slammed it forwards, a decoy. As Trak grabbed it Cain's other hand, pressed flat, crashed into Traks side. Before Trak had even reacted Cain swung himself around and cracked his right hand of Traks neck. Pulling back he looked at his work.

"You didn't even try," he said to the elite.

"I needed to know just how well you fought. Come again, let me show you what true power is," Trak replied with a low bow towards Cain.

Cain drew his hands up to his chest and pounced. Striking forwards with both palms extended he reached for Traks chest. Using his longer arms Trak struck underneath Cain's attack. Hitting him square in the chest, Trak just stood as Cain crumpled to the ground.

Cain wheezed slowly, winded he began to slowly get up. Sitting in a crouch he coughed, Trak moved to help just in case he had severely hurt Cain. Sensing his opportunity Cain spun on one leg, his other hitting the back of Traks knees and bringing him down as well.

Rolling on the ground Trak leapt back up, Cain already standing. Trak smiled, Cain had gotten very good.

"You fight dirty," Trak said aloud, studying the human.

"You are too honourable," Cain replied with a sneer.

"Do you really wish for me to descend to your level?" Trak asked.

"Join me," was Cain's only reply.

Moving with more grace this time Cain began to circle Trak constantly moving his hands, shifting his feet, but never taking his eyes of the elite. Jabbing forwards his punch was deflected easily. Another jab, another block. Cain tried dodging in again, but every attempt he made resulted in another block.

Trak knew it was time. The human grew arrogant and Trak had long since learnt what arrogance could bring, death. Cain jabbed again, his actions beginning to slow down. Trak began to block like usual, sensing no opposition to this now familiar move from Cain he began.

Grabbing the wrist he pulled Cain forwards, twisting at the elbow he forced Cain in front of him and then proceeded to drop him to his knees. Drawing his free hand across Cain's neck he slowly whispered in his ear, "If I was a real covenant, you would be dead."



Trak felt Cain gulp, he was nervous, but when he spoke out it rang of confidence, "If you were a real elite, you wouldn't of taught me this."

Smacking his head backwards Cain caught Trak in his stomach, the force knocking the wind of the elite. Without pausing Cain rolled forwards, one of his feet catching Trak in the groin. The elite roared in pain and dropped to the floor, one hand cupped around his privates.

Cain came up behind Trak and put his hand the elites neck. "No who's the one in trouble?" he shouted in glee.

Trak snarled, in pain and anger, "You did that on purpose!" he finally shouted.

"You said fight dirty," Cain replied grinning.

"Ahh, you're just pissed 'cus I beat you," Trak countered.

"You could never beat me," Trak said simply.

"Oh yeah? And why not?" Cain asked, genuinely perplexed.

"Because I would never fight you for real. We shall be brothers forever," Trak answered.

"Brothers. Forever," Cain replied slowly, releasing his grip on Trak, "Brothers forever."

"Come, it is getting late. You must be hungry," Trak said standing up and walking to the edge of the clearing.

Cain stood where he was. "Do you mean it Trak? We will really be brothers for life?" His face was both worried and excited, endlessly searching the elites own face.

"Forever," Trak said simply, walking into the bush.

-

Trak and Cain sat together at the small lunch table in the corner. Sometime after finishing their meals Rachael and Hannah came along, sitting down beside the brothers.

Rachael began to talk softly to Cain, his face smiling gently at hers. Trak looked away, he felt it was rude to watch such a display of intimacy. Hannah glanced at him, a small smile on her shy face.

"Hi," she said quietly.

"Hello," replied Trak nodding his head at her. A long silence passed, it seemed unbearable to Trak. He wished for it to end, yet dreaded what would come. Eventually Hannah opened her mouth slightly and looked at Trak.

"I er, I heard you and Cain had a fight today," she said slowly, unsure of how she had worded it.

"I am teaching him fighting skills. He learns quickly." Trak replied quickly.

"Oh," Hannah muttered, "cool." Another long silence passed, the moments becoming intolerable once more.

"I was curious. Where you come from, do you have, I mean do you, you know, have girlfriends?" Hannah cautiously asked.

Trak turned to face her. The nervousness was evident in every line on her pretty face, right down to the way the corners of her small mouth twitched.

"I had no female friends on the home world. Males and females are separated at birth. My father had not selected a suitable mate for me when I left."

"You don't get to decide who you marry!" Hannah spat out shocked.

"No," said Trak simply, "Why?"

"Well in human culture you only marry someone you love very deeply, it's a bond between two humans to show their commitment. I would have thought you would be the same," she finished shyly. Had she upset the elite she wondered when Trak looked away, glancing at Rachael and Cain, now touching lips. Kissing the humans called it Trak remembered.

"In the Covenant, you don't get much choice," Trak finally muttered.

"I'm sorry for bringing it up," Hannah said turning away, her eyes becoming red.

"No," Trak said quickly, gently grabbing her small hand, "Thank you, I never knew this part of human culture."

Hannah smiled and stroked the alien hand on hers. "You're welcome," she finally muttered.

The time passed quickly. Two years, and yet it seemed like nothing to Trak. He had been accepted by the people, had grown up with them and now counted himself as one of them.

The town had grown in size, new residents seem to come everyday. With the destruction of more and more planets, what few survivors remained sought refuge where ever they could. Meeting the elite for the first time was quite a shock to most of the newcomers, but they too accepted him quickly.

The town was not the only thing that had grown though. Cain was a few inches taller, but Trak was now almost seven feet tall. He worked out daily, mainly with Cain. They ran around the edge of town and regularly sparred. Cain was getting better and better now, no longer did he fight as dirtily, he fought with honour. Trak was proud, not just of the town he was a part of, or the friendships he had developed, but of what he had become. Every day since he left the Covenant was like a special gift and Trak was not going to squander it.

Cain and Rachael had also become engaged and their bonding ceremony was to be held within a few weeks. Trak had been puzzled when Cain asked him to be Best Man, but after explaining it he was honoured. Cain put him before any other male in the town.

For the first time in Traks life he looked forwards to the future. He had hope, he had dreams, he had a new life, but most of all he had friends.

## 7. VII

Hey Everyone! I haven't put one in so far so just quickly : I don't own Halo etc etc. You know the drill.

Next on to my reviews. Thank you all so much, especially Spacefan (I took note of your last comment btw)! I really appreciate you taking time out to not only read my story (which is currently the longest I've ever written) but also let me know your feelings! Thank you.

Now for the story. This is just the beginning. Sounds corny I know, but believe me Trak and Cain are only around 18 at the moment and they have a long, long way to go. I hope you can read through to the end, because I am sure as hell going to write this thing, if only to shut my mind up.

Enjoy!

Reconciled Brother

### Chapter 7 : Life & Death Part I

Cain stood in his small house. He had butterflies, this time tomorrow he would be a married man. Trying to explain to Trak what a best man was had been hard, but not half as troublesome as explaining the purpose of a stag night.

Trak just did not understand the point of going out for a party and getting completely hammered. He thought it was stupid. Cain would show him. All of Cain's friends were coming out tonight for the part, and Cain would make sure Trak got wasted.

There was a knock at the door. Cain jumped slightly at the abrupt sound. Trak stood nervously in the doorway looking around the room that was Cain's new home. Trak had long since moved out from his small room in the Gym. He was one of the first to have a proper home. Located on the very edge of the town, his small bungalow type home was perfect for him.

"You gonna stand there all day or come in?" Cain said, pulling Trak from his thoughts.

"I like your home. It is very comfortable."

Cain smiled lightly, glancing around once more at the bare walls. "I haven't had a chance to decorate it yet, it's gonna look better when I'm done. And Rach' is moving in after the wedding." Cain gulped nervously, living with Rachael would be a whole new experience.

Trak looked at his brother, "You will be fine, Rachael loves you very much. You will be good mates for each other."

"Please don't say mates, it makes me think of animals."

Trak grinned widely, "But you are an animal." Cain shot Trak an evil grin and began to rummage through the packages for his tie. Trak moved forwards and looked at the assorted boxes strewn over the floor.

"So what are you gonna' wear tomorrow?" Cain asked, trying to guess as to what Trak could wear.

"I shall wear my armour. It shows my respect for your bonding and it had been too long since I last wore it."

Cain nodded, "Cool, I haven't seen you in it for ages."

"Are you still going to go through with this ritual tonight?" Trak slowly inquired.

"Oh yeah, and you are still coming. There's no way in hell I'm going to let you back out of it."

Trak huffed loudly, "Very well."

-

The night air was cool and the town was alive. Trak moved slowly through the streets not wanting to go to the party, but knowing that in the end he would have to, Cain was relying on him.

The towns one and only pub was up ahead, the sounds of laughter already filtering out into the night. Trak took one long deep breath and opened the door. The noise was immense, Traks hearing was much better than any human and the relentless sounds assaulted his eardrums.

Cautiously moving through the crowds Trak found Cain leaning on the counter ordering another beer, as soon as he saw Trak though he doubled the order. Handing the chilled glass to Trak, Cain leant back and looked out over the people.

"Glad to see you finally came," Cain said over the music.

"How long have you been here?" Trak asked feeling slightly guilty.

"Only 'bout twenty minutes. So," Cain said turning to face his friend, "I heard about you and Hannah." A grin cracked over his face, quickly hidden by the beer glass.

"You and everyone else," Trak said sighing.

"So come on man, tell me. What was it like?"

"What was what like?" Trak asked, trying to fake incompetence. Unsuccessfully.

"Don't play dumb, I know what happened. You two spent the night together. There's no way in hell you were a gentlemen \_all\_ night," Cain said stretching out the all.

"We talked," Trak started.

"And?" Cain pressed.

"Andâ€¦ And we showed our affection for each other. Nothing more."

"Oh man!" Trak shouted, "I knew it. You scored didn't you!"

Trak looked at his feet, slowly taking a gulp of the icy brew before replying, "She said she didn't care what species I was. She is of a pure heart Cain. I think Iâ€¦ I think I love her."

Cain patted Trak on the back, "Hey man, Hannah is perfect for you," he said, before shaking his head once more, "I can't believe you did it though!" he exclaimed.

"And why not!" Trak answered, getting angry, "I have reproductive organs too, and it is common for my people to show affection to one they truly love. And I truly love Hannah."

"Chill man, I know. Here, drink up. You're already three pints behind me."

"This is a competition," Trak asked, surprised, "to consume the most alcohol."

"We could make it one," Cain answered, "unless you think you would lose."

Trak smiled widely and quickly downed the rest of his pint, "You're on."

The rest of the night went by in a blur for Trak. He won the arm wrestling competition, easily he thought. Some human women stripped before the men, Trak looked away ashamed. Surely it was not good behaviour, but the rest of the men, Cain especially, seemed to enjoy the show.

Within three hours the party was in full swing and it was Cain who was behind in the beer competition. Trak could easily gulp down an entire glass and still carry on, but he felt the effects begin to take hold. His reactions had slowed, his sight blurred and his voice slurred.

Cain appeared before him. "Hey man, slow down. Jesus I didn't know you could knock that stuff back so quick."

"Then why did you challenge me," Trak asked lazily.

Cain shook his head, he knew it was his fault. He watched as Trak finished another glass and look around slowly.

"Where are the restrooms?" he finally asked, his head swaying slightly.

"Over there," said Cain pointing at the far side of the pub.

"I'll be rightttttt. I'll be right back," said Trak slowly ambling off towards the loos.

"And make sure you use the right one!" shouted Cain after the retreating giant.

Looking around Cain quickly spotted some mates and headed over. Sitting himself down he watched as they recalled past jokes and stories. Something twisted at his stomach, it could have been the booze or the nerves of the wedding to come. Or something else. Placing his head in his hands, Cain gently massaged his eyes with his palms. Exhaling slowly Cain looked up slowly and saw Trak returning from the restrooms. Ambling over he looked down at Cain and slowly exhaled as well.

"I am feeling unwell. I am sorry, but I must rest for the night if you wish to see me tomorrow."

Cain nodded, feeling his own head droop, "Sure man. Just don't stay in bed too long."

Trak nodded his appreciation and silently left the pub.

-

Resting against the back of the pub Trak slowly drew in breath, held it, then released it. He felt awful, his stomach churned and his head swam in the liquid he had consumed so much of.

"Stupid alcohol," he muttered aloud to no one in particular.

A sound caught his dulled ears, laughter, close by and getting nearer. Three men emerged from around the corner, all of them looked like they belonged in the military. One of them looked up from his laughter to see Trak leaning against the wall. His smile grew even wider and he nudged his partners. They all looked up quickly, their smiles turning to evil grins.

"Well lookie here boys, we got ourselves a bonefied good elite," the first man sang out. The other two sniggered but Trak shook his head and began to walk away.

"Hey, wait up blue boy. We wanted to ask you something." Trak turned at the insult and flared his mandibles. The men took no notice, quickly moving towards him, the outer two flanking his sides.

"Ed here is Hannah's brother as you may know. But what we wanna' know is what did you do to her last night? Huh bluey? Come on."

"Yeah man, she came home all upset sayin' you had forced her to be your bitch. Well come on, what you got to say for yourself," the other man chipped in.

Trak felt mortified. Had Hannah really felt he was trying to harm her, he had thought she wanted it as much as he did. She was the one who made the moves. She did want it. Then it clicked, they were tricking him. Trying to provoke him.

"Your sister is of age, she can make her own decisions and take on board the consequences. She doesn't need you to baby-sit her."

The called Ed looked outraged, "Why you little fucker, I ought to kick your ass for saying that."

"Your words bring no effect to me," Trak replied coolly, un-afraid of any repercussions. The men moved, flexing their muscles threateningly.

"We ought to teach this little alien here some manners. Like how to respect good humans who have treated him well."

Trak felt his anger flare, "I know how to treat humans. I treat them with the respect they give me. Maybe it is you who are the ones in the wrong here."

The first man stepped forwards again, "You sayin' that you're better than us!" he spat out.

"Again, you are the one in the wrong. Maybe the alcohol is clouding your judgement. Now please, let me be. I wish for no trouble tonight."

"Well you're gonna' get some." The man swung forwards, his hand impacting against the back of Traks head. Falling heavily to the ground Trak shook his head, the coward had hit him from behind. This was not a fight, this was an attack.

"You cowards," Trak roared. The first man kicked him again, this time in the stomach. "I will not succumb to your attacks." They kicked him again, this time Trak fell onto his back, his ribs hurting badly.

"Well if you're not scared then maybe you should be for Hannah's sake!" Ed shouted out, "If you don't bugged of now I'll go straight to the head quarters and say you raped her! She'll deny it, but the captain will understand why she would. You'll be hanging by this time tomorrow. Do you really want that!"

Trak looked down at his hands, they were clenched into tight fists. Slowly raising himself to full height he looked at the humans. "You would really be that manipulative!" Trak spat at the ground in pure anger and hatred. "YOU DISGUST ME! FILTHY PATHETIC HUMANS!" Trak lunged at the lead man, jabbing his fist as hard as he could into the stupid mans throat. Trak crushed the windpipe and knocked the man to the ground. He clutched desperately at his throat, the breaths becoming harder and more laboured with each progressive gulp of air. He would be dead within four minutes and Trak knew it.

Sneering he looked up in time to see Ed run at him. The third man disappeared around the edge of the pub. Pulling a knife out of his pocket Ed began to circle the elite, just the two of them now. "No sister of mine is gonna' fuck an alien," he shouted.

"Then you have no sister," Trak replied smiling at the expression on the mans face. Slashing his knife forwards Trak easily dodged the attack. "Is that the best you can do! Pitiful."

Ed jumped forwards again slamming the knife out in front of him. Trak

rolled around and swung the blade inwards at the same time. Ed couldn't stop. He fell forwards onto his own blade. The cold metal shaft piercing his heart. Dropping to his knees he gripped the hilt and slowly removed the blade from his chest. "Bastard," he whispered, before falling onto the ground.

Suddenly Trak heard a hundred footsteps race towards him. It seemed the entire congregation at the party had come out to see what had happened. The third man was in the lead, he looked shocked at what he saw but quickly regained himself. "See!" he shouted out, "he killed them! And he would of killed me too! All they wanted to do was go home, but he jumped us!"

Trak stood rigid, angered at the accusation, but he knew another bout of violence would not solve this problem. Lowering his head he let the blade fall to the ground and slowly stepped backwards.

"What I did, I did for love and honour. No man can challenge what I have done if he knew the truth," Trak spoke out aloud to the crowd, "But your prejudice for my kind will forever prevent that from happening. I must leave you now, do not follow me."

Trak turned and ran into the night. The darkness swallowing him up until the only thing that remained were two lost lives and one destroyed.

-

"Because I do not wish to shed any more human blood."

The words rang through Traks mind. His pledge to Cain made so long ago. And now he had broken it. Destroyed in one night. His life here was over, he had no home, no friends. He had nothing.

Placing his head in his hands Trak cried on top of his tree. He wasn't on top anymore, he had fallen to the deepest, darkest regions of hell and not a ray of hope could ever shine through.

## 8. VIII

Well here it is, the next chapter. I'm going to have to slow down after this one, at least for two weeks what with all the coursework I'm doing at the moment. Thanks again to all my reviewers, you're what make it worth my time doing this. As for the story, well this is really a mini turning point. The next chapter will really set the scene for later on in the story. Enjoy and be sure to let me know what you think.

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Reconciled Brother

Chapter 8 : Forgive Me For I Have Sinned

With the first light of the morning came realisation for Trak. He would have to leave the human planet now, they could not accept him after what he had done. He could have walked away from those humans, but no, he had to defend his honour. Hannah. He had done it protect Hannah, he told himself again.



Silently entering his house Trak removed his few treasured items. His blade, field kit and other various affections. Finally he looked at the single book he possessed. Cain had given it to him after Trak had asked to borrow it so many times. Moses had lead his people free, now Trak must return in chains.

Quickly he tried to don his armour, but two years of not using it and constant growth resulted in the armour being far to small for Traks new body. Instead he carefully placed it in his bag and slung it over onto his shoulders. Finally he looked for a piece of paper. He owed Cain a goodbye. He could not say it to his face though. Coward, he said to himself, angry at what he must do.

The morning light had fully arrived. The town would soon be alive, reliving the events of the previous night. The search parties, and there would undoubtedly be search parties, would surely be looking for Trak. And eventually they would check his home again.

Opening the door a crack Trak looked out over the deserted grassland between his home and the edge of the forest. Positive it was safe Trak sprinted the full five hundred metres to the forest and slumped against the tree. Taking one final look he trudged into the dense woods, he had to leave the planet. How, it didn't matter, just so long as he never put another human at risk. As long as Hannah was alright.

-

Cain rolled over in his bed. God it hurt. He wondered why though. He had never had a hangover this bad. Then it struck him like a freight train and three hundred miles an hour.

Trak

Oh God. Why had Trak done those things! Cain rolled over and toppled of his bed. In less than twelve hours he would be a married man, supposedly the happiest thing in his entire life and yet he felt likeâ€¦

"Crap," he whispered to the small room.

Groggily getting dressed Cain thought deep and hard about what the surviving man had said, not an easy thing to do when your head was awash with pain and nausea.

He had claimed that Trak had jumped the men believing them to be making fun of him. That sounded nothing like Trak though, the Trak Cain knew was careful, patient, understanding. Not a murderous beast.

But he been once, a small voice piped in.

Cain squashed it, stamped on it and spat on it. No. Trak had changed; he was more human than Covenant. Then why had Trak attacked them the small voice asked again?

The sun outside was blinding, shielding his eyes from its powerful glare Cain started towards Traks small house. It was very close, a special request to the builders on Cain's part.

Knocking on the door Cain got no response, as expected. Using his spare key Cain slowly opened the door and peered inside. Instantly he knew Trak had been and gone. The once proud armour was no longer on its stand, a bare patch of wall all that remained. The rest of the room was the same, perfectly neat and tidy, the way only a very proud outsider could leave a room, nothing out of place. Poking around though Cain noticed certain items were missing. Special things he knew Trak revered. Trak had been and gone, too late now thought Cain sadly.

A single letter stood out though next to a small light. On its front was the spidery writing of Traks hand. He had never quite mastered how to use a pen Cain thought humorously. Delicately opening the seal Cain wondered if he really wanted to read the contents. But the prospect of never knowing what they contained far outweighed any damage that could be done. At least he would know what Traks final words were.

-

"To my Brother Cain,

Forgive me for I have sinned. Once, a long time ago, I promised you that I would never harm another human. I sit here now thinking of all that I have undone because of last night. Hopefully you can find it in yourself to give me forgiveness, but I do not expect it. I must earn that forgiveness, something I cannot do. At least not now.

I fought in the name of honour last night, that you must believe. It was a challenge upon my very beliefs, but also something much closer to my heart. Hannah. Please do not let her weep for my loss. Tell her to move on, make her see sense. She must love again, if only to overcome what I have done to her. Done to you all.

I will soon be leaving this planet. You can rest assured that I will not return. Do not search for me. Do not cry for me. Do not forgive me. I did what I did alone. I alone must face the consequences.

I will return to my kind, they will surely kill me, but that will be my final payment. To them, to humanity, to Hannah. To you.

Goodbye dear brother. May you live long and enjoy the love Rachael brings. My blessings for your wedding.

I leave you my final words. Written long ago on your world they bring the only comfort possible to me. May you take heed of their meaning.

It matters not how straight the gate,

Nor how charged with punishments the scroll.

I am the Master of my Fate.

I am the Captain of my Soul.

Final Farewells,

Trak Basamme,

Third son of Ruis Basamme.

-

Cain let the letter fall from his hands. His body shook. His mind raced and stopped at the same time. Trak had truly left. He would return to the Covenant he so despised. And they would kill him. No, Cain wailed in his mind.

"NO!" he shouted pleadingly at the bare walls. "No," he whimpered softly.

Walking out of the small room Cain was in a daze. He saw nothing, only felt unending pain. The letter was clutched tightly in his hand. Traks hand.

Cain walked un-obstructed into the town hall, pushing the door open he walked straight into captain Harrison's office, his face a mix of anger and sorrow. The captain jerked up from the reports he was reading, surprised at the sudden interruption.

"What in the hell are you doing son!" he shouted out.

Cain slammed the letter down onto the desk and stood back as the captain read over its contents. Eventually he looked back at Cain.

"They're going to kill him sir! He's innocent and they are going to kill him!" Cain almost shouted at the aging officer.

"We would of done the same Johnson, he killed two men and I don't care if he had the best reason on Earth to do so. He did kill and in every culture I know that is a crime."

Cain sobbed lightly, his emotions getting the better of him. "I have to talk to him before he leaves sir, if he even can."

The captain glanced at the young man in front of him, "You're sure," he finally asked, "seems to me he wants to leave in peace."

"He'll understand when he sees me. Please, let me help him."

Sighing loudly the captain looked down at his oak desk. "I'll station patrols at all the major airports, if he tries to leave they'll hold him for you. Tell him he can have one of the older model pelicans. I don't suspect we'll get it back."

"Thank you sir," Cain barely whispered.

"Trak was a friend of everyone in this town, he deserves this."

Nodding slowly Cain stood up and slowly left the captains room. Now all he had to do was wait for Trak to show up.

-

The forest was thick, but Trak travelled quickly. Thick vines snapped, others simply pushed out of his path. He knew the closest

airport was this way. Visible from his tree he knew it would only take him an hour or so to reach it. The resistance would be light. Resistance. He already thought of the humans as his enemies. By the Gods. Had so much changed. Would they treat him like an enemy? Trak dreaded the possibilities. He could not let himself be taken. He would have to escape on one of the spacecraft as quickly as possible.

Soon the perimeter walls came into view. They were short, designed more to show the boundaries than to keep out unwanted visitors. Looking across the deserted airfields Trak saw few humans. The main control tower looked deserted and the large hangers were shut tight. Perfect thought Trak.

Quickly edging around the perimeter fence Trak arrived behind the control tower. It was empty, just as he had predicted. Hastily Trak dashed towards the hanger. The airfield was deserted, but he didn't want to take any chances. Suddenly without warning three warthogs pulled into the airport. Trak spun, he was in the middle of an open runway with no cover for at least two hundred metres. Cursing himself he dropped to the ground and hoped he had not been seen.

His luck was not in. The three vehicles swerved in his direction and the drivers put on an extra spurt of speed. Cursing again Trak picked himself up and ran for the hanger. He could not let himself be taken now, not this close. The hanger was only one hundred and fifty metres ahead, but the 'hogs would reach him before he could even get halfway. It was a futile effort, but an effort nonetheless.

The vehicles were upon him, forming a wide circle, the rear mounted guns locked on the lone elite standing motionless in the middle. "Get down on the floor! Now!" one of the men shouted. Trak slowly turned, taking in every detail, looking for any weakness. Finding none he began to speak, but was instantly cut off. "Shut the fuck up! We were told to keep you here by Harrison himself, your mates comin' and we gotta' keep you here until he arrives. We ain't gonna shoot unless you make us."

Trak looked quizzically at the human. Was this human they spoke of Cain? Was he coming to see Trak? Why? He should just stay back at the town. Why did he have to make this so hard! "Please, I must leave," Trak pleaded.

"What's the rush?" one of the other men questioned, "Got something on your conscience?"

Trak frowned but another car was already speeding into the airport. Trak could already see Cain in the passenger seat, his eyes wide. The vehicle came to a stop and Cain practically ran out. He stood just inside the circle staring at the elite.

"You left," he began, "and you didn't even say goodbye!"

Trak gulped nervously, he had not expected Cain to be so aggravated.

"You must understand what I did Cain. They threatened Hannah. They attacked me when my back was turned. I could not let the challenge pass."

"You could of told me. You could of told the captain. You could of done a hundred different things."

"But none would uphold my honour."

"Who gives a fuck about your honour. I thought you were becoming more and more human, but you showed just how Covenant you really are."

"Please Cain. Don't. You couldn't understand, it is something that is totally alien to you. I did what I must. I thought you would of understood." Trak shook his head slightly, "I was wrong."

"So now you're just going to run away. Is that it! You kill for your honour then run away like a coward!"

"And what would you have me do, huh Cain?" Trak shouted, his anger finally getting the better of him.

"I would ofâ€¦" Cain faltered, his voice breaking. "Why didn't you come and find me afterwards man? I'm your brother."

"I had broken my promise to you. I could not face you."

"Please. Don't go. For me. For Hannah," Cain pleaded.

"One day we shall be brothers again, but for now we must go our separate ways. I will never forget you Cain," Trak said, slowly walking towards the hanger.

"YOU BASTARD!" Cain shouted after the retreating elite. "You said you would be my brother forever. Doesn't that mean anything to you? BROTHERS FOREVER!"

"Brothers forever," whispered Trak before disappearing inside the hanger.

-

The small spacecrafts in the hanger were laid out in two long lines. Trak walked up to the oldest looking one and climbed into the cockpit. He was familiar with human flight technologies, it was part of his schooling. He looked around, trying to remember which buttons to press, but Cain's final words rang out in his mind. Like a constant barrage they obliterated all other thoughts.

"Forever," whispered Trak pressing a small green switch. The engines roared to life and Trak secured himself in the human shaped seat. Remotely opening the doors Trak piloted the vessel out, shakily at first, but soon gaining control. Cain stood in the middle of the doorway, his hands by his side, his head facing the pelican.

"Brothers Forever," he mouthed before Trak passed him and gained altitude.

-

The sky slowly changed from blue to black as Trak left the atmosphere of the planet. Over two years ago he had been plummeting through the

very same air, about to commence battle for the first time. Now he was returning to his true home.

The possibility of death hung in the air. He would be tortured surely before his death. Trak did not dread it. He accepted it with open arms. His brothers would hate him, but Trak did not care. He would return home one last time.

But a final thought flickered across his mind. One of a new possibility. He hated the idea, but it would prove him to all others. Maybe even spare his life. Maybe, just maybe. But as Trak had thought before, maybe was a very big word.

## 9. IX

Sorry about the long wait but I'm now in my final week of coursework with over 5 main projects coming to a close. After this week the updates should/will come thick and fast. Just to let you know the next few chapters probably won't have much action, but soon hell will break loose.

As for my reviews, thank you all for being so nice. I just want to make one thing clear though, the Master Chief and all other characters in the Halo universe will not appear in my story. This is totally independent and I just feel bringing them in will be tacky. I might make a passing reference to them though so no flaming me later on.

Enjoy the chapter.

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Reconciled Brother

Chapter 9 : Redemption & Retribution

The journey was cold. The abyss outside the cockpits small windows itself a window into Traks mind. His soul.

He knew where he was going, all he had to do was get there. Setting the autopilot he squeezed out of the seat and made his way into the rear compartment. Looking around he saw no surprises, no hitch hikers, no Cain, he though solemnly. Sitting on the cold metal floor Trak began to meditate, something he had not done since leaving his fathers ship. His father.

A torrent of memories came crashing down on Trak. What would his father think. He had hated Trak before the humans, but now, after spending two years with them, what would he do to his son. Trak knew death was not an unreasonable punishment. He hung his head.

A new thought came into his mind though, his fathers voice. Deep and commanding. "The humans have made you weak," it said, over and over again. Trak carefully unsheathed his small blade, twirling it between his fingers. The light danced of the reflective surface, a lone ray of hope. Gripping the hilt in his right hand Trak looked straight up, "Forgive me mighty Forerunner," he whispered before drawing the blade across his skin. The metal cut deeply, his purple blood running from the wound. It would heal, but the scar would remind Trak what he had

done.

"I slayed two units of the best elites you had Father," Trak spoke menacingly to the walls of the craft, "And now I will return to you. I will make you proud of me. No matter what I have to do to prove it."

The cockpit emitted a small beep, rising slowly Trak bowed his head and moved to the cramped seat. A radar scan showed a large vessel bearing down on the tiny pelican. FoF tags identified it as a Covenant battle cruiser. "Excellent," sneered Trak.

Powering up the engines Trak raced his craft towards his brethren. Seraph fighters glinted in the glow of the main vessel and Trak knew he must speak quickly. Opening up a communications channel he began to speak to whoever would listen.

"This is Trak Basamme, third son of Ruis Basamme, and survivor of the human infidels." Trak could almost hear the astonishment on the other end of the channel, they would surely be wondering who this elite was, but Trak continued on.

"Grant me safe passage to the Prophets, I have much to say."

"Where do you come from?" a deep voice finally questioned.

"The planet of the Sangheili. I was taken during a raid on a human world. Let me come aboard, this craft reviles me."

Trak waited nervously, it seemed like an entire unit before the voice spoke once more, "Follow the seraphs."

One of the small fighters flew in front of the pelican and slowly led the way to a docking bay. Trak set the pelican down and let out a deep sigh. He was home, nearly. As he opened the cockpit door a hundred rifles locked on him.

"Step down slowly. Traitor," a voice called out, the same one of the com channel.

"What is the meaning of this!" Trak shouted, the nervousness evident in his voice and manner.

"We know of you Basamme. We know what you did. You will see the prophets, but not before you have been punished for your crimes." An evil grin swept over the face of the white elite.

"Very well," Trak answered simply, before three elites rushed forwards and tackled him to the ground. As they dragged him away Trak spoke softly to the comforting purple walls, "Home sweet home."

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Usjo' Lhuew looked down over the traitorous bastard assigned to him. He knew the stories as well as any other elite. This weakling had turned in battle slaughtering many fine warriors and then, to compact the wound, had gone to the humans to live. He spat on the body. Then kicked it, the moan issuing from within it a pleasing sound to Usjo's ears.

"Get up you piece of Looy!" he roared, kicking again, "You have not even begun to feel the pain!"

The elite rolled over onto his back and looked Lhew straight in the eyes, "No matter what pain you bring to me, it will never amount to what I have done to myself."

Lhew screamed in anger and kicked the fool clear across the chamber. Trak smashed against the wall and fell hard. He raised his left arm, "Look! I did this to myself, I repent my sins, but ask that you continue!" Lhew stalled glancing at the bloody marks across the skin, he had not caused those.

"You draw your own blood?" he finally asked, "Why?"

Trak hung his head, letting the blood flow freely from his mandibles. "The humans made me weak. I fought two battles and the humans cheered for my victory, my stupidity." Lhew snorted in disgust, but before he could continue his assault Trak continued.

"But, when I spilled their blood they turn on me. They have no honour. No brotherhood. They are weak and I see now why the Gods wanted them cleansed. They should not be allowed to live. Any of them." Trak looked up at the elite, he had meant every last word he had said.

Lhew slowly came forwards and crouched beside Trak's fallen form. His emotions were undistinguishable, but he gazed deeply into Trak's face. Finally he raised his arm and smashed Trak across the face.

"Bastard," he roared before dragging Trak back to his solitary cell.

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Trak remained motionless on the cold metal floor of his room, his prison. It had been almost two weeks now and the assaults had been relentless. His arms and legs were fractured, but still they kept on at him.

Rolling onto his side Trak grimaced in pain, the most recent beating still fresh in his mind and on his skin. A small bowl of dirty water had been placed in a corner, gulping deeply Trak tried to imagine himself somewhere else. Sangheili. The beautiful planet surface came to mind instantly. The rolling hills and tall forests. Trak sighed deeply, a fire erupting in his chest. He would never see it again.

The plasma screen for his cell popped and vanished, permitting Lhew to enter. He looked down at his work, the smirk evident.

"Ready for more?" he asked, indifferent to the answer.

"Leave me or kill me," Trak replied dryly. The grin on Lhew's face vanished instantly.

"I thought you should know you have a visitor. Normally we don't allow vermin like you to socialise with others, but he, insisted,"



said Lhuew. Stepping back another elite walked into the small cell, looking down at his brother.

"Trak?" he asked cautiously.

Coughing Trak slowly righted himself and leaned against the far wall. Opening his swollen eye lids he looked at his second oldest brother.

"It is good to see you again Omabi, although I wish it could have been in better circumstances." Lhuew snorted, but Omabi spun and told him to leave them be, grumbling deeply the guard left.

"What happened to you," questioned Omabi, kneeling down beside his blood brother. "Why did you do what you did?"

Trak coughed again, but replied slowly. "In my moment of weakness the Gods decided to test me. And I failed them," he cried out. Omabi put his arm around Trak and looked at him.

"The prophets wish to speak to you brother," he said slowly, Traks head perking up at the news, "And father. You are free."

Trak coughed once more, purple blood frothing at the side of his mandibles. "I am not worthy of seeing either," he slowly sighed.

"Not yet, but you will be. You're coming home with me, J'halass says she does not mind you staying."

Trak smiled, his first smile in a long time, "So, you finally mated with her?"

Omabi smiled as well, "A cycle after you left we made our vows. She is bearing our first child at the moment."

"I am happy for you brother," Trak said deeply.

"And I am happy for you. Now you have a chance to repent your sins against the Forerunner."

"And I will do so with vigour," Trak replied.

Omabi helped Trak up and the two of them left the dingy cell to return to Omabi's vessel. Trak lay on the soft mattress and rested as he returned home. Finally.

## 10. X

Ok then, this chapter is up. Took a while to write because of school and stuff, but it's done. I'm still going through and changing things, so expect this chapter to change a lot. As for Trak, well, he's going to go through a lot soon.

Just one or two other things as well. My name Dachande does come from an Aliens versus Predator book (another favourite genre of mine). And I do try and check my work, but as any of you might know trying to proof read your own work is almost impossible. I've got a few friends who are reading it and they point out mistakes for me.

Oh well, hope you like this chapter. Not really my best one IMO, but it's leading up to something.

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Reconciled Brother

Chapter 10 : Redemption & Retribution Part II

Trak slept solidly, his first uninterrupted sleep since he had returned. But they were not restful, his mind flicked through his life, with the humans and before. The emotions came quickly in his weakened condition, he let them flow for he could not stop them.

Sometimes a memory would swim to the turbulent surface of Traks mind, his moaning lost against the crashing of the waves. And then it would fall, fall into the deep abyss of his mind.

Trak sat up suddenly on the small bed. His skin was dry, his limbs trembled and he took slow breaths. Humans. The word filled Trak with emotions, but not pleasant ones as would have been the case a month before. Now it was hate, pulsing through every vein in every part of Traks body. They had made him weak, taken him from his real home and now tormented him when he had returned. They hadn't cared about him, Trak mused, they just wanted an ally, anyone and anything they could use. They were weaker, and they had brought him down to their level!

Standing up Trak walked over to a Sangheili sized dummy, used for placing armour when not in usage. Trak struck out with his left hand, felt the sore muscles protest, but continued. He chopped with each hand in turn, high and low, left and right. His upper body burned, every muscle felt as if it had been torn, but still Trak continued. When his arms fell limply to his side he began with his legs, spinning and kicking with all his energy. Eventually Trak lay back against the smooth cold wall, the soft glow emitted a comfortable reminder of home.

The door hissed open and Omabi peered in cautiously. His face widened in shock when he saw no body on the bed, but soon relief flooded across his mandibles as he spied Trak sitting in the shadows.

"I heard noises. I thought you had fallen of your bed again," he said slowly, looking at Traks heavy panting.

"I had not," Trak replied coldly, unsure as to why he was acting so frostily.

"Brother," Omabi said moving further into the room, "Why do you punish yourself so?"

Trak sighed lightly and looked up at his blood brother, "Because I must repay my sins against the Forerunner. Against the Prophets. Against everything and everyone I have ever known! I must, I will."

"Do not punish yourself Trak, punish the humans, they were the ones who did this to you. Make them pay with their lives, not yours. Soon

the prophets will judge you, but it seems you have already done that duty."

"I was selfish," Trak answered slowly, "Omabi, do you think?"

"Ask me Trak."

"Do you think the prophets will let me live?"

It was Omabi's turn to look away, his lowering gaze gave Trak his answer.

"I deserve as much," Trak whispered in his brothers' ear as he walked past.

"Where are you going?" Omabi asked quickly.

"If I am to die in the next few days, I want to make sure I use them wisely," Trak said without looking behind him.

"Wait for me then, I have not seen you since we joined the academy. You have much to tell me."

"As do you."

-

The ship was small by Covenant standards, designed with speed and agility in mind it had been stripped of everything but the essentials. A shame then thought Trak as he helped Omabi clear the main cargo bay to make room for their little spar. Omabi had wanted to know just how weak Trak had become, he had been able to beat him easily before he had even left to train for combat, now he would surely beat his brother into the Great Journey.

Trak finished shoving a large case of Ty' rip into a corner and walked back to the centre of the room, slowly stretching his muscles, the adrenaline already building up in him. Omabi stood opposite him, slowly meditating before the fight. One of his eyes cracked open and he smirked at Trak.

"Are you sure you don't want to use the wooden poles? You were always better with them," he questioned.

"Only if you feel you need them," Trak replied, his voice calm and cool. He was ready to beat his brother this time.

Omabi slowly lowered his hands to his side and glared at Trak, then muttering a few last words he moved forwards into the fighting stance. Trak did the same, but with no words spoken for he did not want to defile the Gods before his spar.

"Eh Nak!" screamed Omabi lunging forwards. His clawed hands came slashing through the air, Traks swiftly gliding in front of his chest deflecting the minor attacks. He gave a small chuckle and batted his brother back.

"Either I have gotten better, or you have gotten worse," he said with his mandibles parted widely. "Or both," he added finally.

Omabi simply sneered, "Just testing you dear brother, I wouldn't want to harm you so early on."

"You're concerned for me. I'm touched. But do not let your restraint hold you back, strike me down like I know you want to. Unless you feel you can't," Trak finished with a wide grin.

Omabi came again, this time faster, the moves swifter and more complex. Trak spun to match his brothers' attacks. Omabi's attack was relentless, but Trak stood his ground slowly beating back the onslaught. Omabi's arms dropped slightly and Trak struck lashing out against his chest. Omabi staggered back, but Trak moved forwards, now he was the attacker and it felt so good.

Omabi's eyes widened, in shock or fear Trak did not know. All he cared about was beating his brother. Omabi dropped to his left knee and spun taking down Trak with one swift movement. But Trak did not let the manoeuvre get the better of him, he rolled on his back his legs a flurry of danger. Arching his back Trak righted himself and kicked out his own leg, Omabi's kneecap buckled forwards naturally and his upper body lowered. Trak raised his tightly balled fist and shot it upwards, impacting against the descending head. Omabi flew backwards, his body crashing to the ground in front of Trak.

As Trak walked over slowly he surveyed his work. Amazing he thought, that all this time he was capable of being victorious, yet held back.

"I am sorry brother," he said, reaching down to help Omabi up.

"Do not be, I lost honourably."

"No, it is not that," Trak continued, "I am sorry I let you all beat me before. I did not wish to fight when I was young, you must remember my reluctance to go to the training academy. Until father made me."

"You mean, you could fight this well all along!" Omabi replied unbelieving.

Trak slowly nodded his head and turned towards the door leading to the rest of the ship, "But why?" his brothers voice echoed out.

"Why did you always let us win? You could of beaten me at any time. Why! Why did you not fight!" Omabi screamed now enraged at how his brother had played him for a fool.

"I told you!" Trak spat back, "I did not like the violence, that is why I left to join the humans! But now I have returned and I realise that true power comes from proving your worth, by earning your respect."

Omabi hung his head slowly, "Then you have earned my respect," he finally whispered.

"Wait until after my hearing before saying such things," Trak softly replied.

"I will be a witness for you if you want brother," Omabi said placing

a long clawed hand on Traks small body, "It would be an honour."

Trak knocked his head against Omabi's before turning once more and retiring to his room.

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Omabi had shone greatly in the eyes of the Gods, he now commanded a moderately sized fleet and had many victories under his belt. It was testament to his power that he was able to bring Trak from his punishers to the Prophets, if only to save him from more pain.

Omabi was given a spacious room on High Charity, his rank deserved no less. Trak though was thrown back into another dingy cell, the guards here even more brutal if that was possible. Leaning against the cold wall Trak thought ahead to his trial, Omabi could be his witness if the Prophets allowed it. Trak sighed, he was all alone in the prison block for the moment, no visitors were allowed and talking was punishable by burning.

The time finally came. Trak heard the distant sounds of many feet moving rapidly closer. Eventually the large doors opened and five elites walked in, flanked by two hunters. They all wore the ceremonial armour of the Prophets, deep black armour carved with intricate patterns emblazoned in fiery red hues.

As one of the elites de-activated the plasma screen the two hunters moved forwards, each taking an arm and pulling Trak from his hole. The lead elite stepped forwards in front of Trak, he took a long moment to study the weakened elite, disgust etched into every line of his face. Motioning with his hands two more elites stepped towards Trak, each placing a plasma ring around his wrists, there would be no escape. Turning on his heel the lead elite left the room, Trak and his guard following soundlessly.

They moved quickly through the hallways of High Charity, Trak received nothing but hateful glances from every member of the Covenant he passed. As to be expected he thought silently to himself. The party moved deeper into the bowels of the huge city, closer and closer to the Prophets lair. The guards here were more numerous, each carried an ornamental spear, its decoration old, its ability still sharp. Eventually after more than forty minutes Trak arrived outside the doors to the courtroom, his fate lying in wait on the other side.

The metallic doors slid away revealing a darkened room beyond. The two hunters released their grip and pushed Trak forwards. Almost tripping over he stumbled into the room and his eyes immediately began to adjust to the dim light. Behind him the two hunters and the remaining elites took up positions silently along the walls. Trak returned his gaze to the centre of the room where a thin light shone from the ceiling. Walking forwards he entered its narrow circumference and waited, his entire body trembling despite his best efforts to contain himself.

A figure slowly emerged from the darkness. The floating body crowned by an ornate headdress meant this could only be a prophet, and a High Prophet at that. Two more slowly emerged to the sides of the first, each smaller both in size and power. Trak dropped to one knee and

looked towards the ground.

"Noble Prophets, I am atâ€|" Trak began.

"Silence!" said the first prophet loudly, glaring down at the elite before him.

Trak hung his head even lower, but did not make a single sound, his breathing stopped, his heart stopped, event the thoughts in his mind became silenced by the prophets command.

"You come before us Basamme, a traitor, coward and murderer," the prophet spoke out slowly, "That alone is enough to condemn you to death."

Trak raised his head slightly so that he could just see the first prophet, surely they would let him have a final word.

"You stayed with the infidel humans," the prophet continued, "to escape justice, but also, as was suggested by others, because you favour the humans. Is this so?"

Trak breathed in slowly before replying, "It was, your Excellency."

"Was? What do you mean 'was'?"

"In the context of my life, there was a point in which I did favour the humans to my own race."

"Go on," prompted the prophet.

"When I was young, just a child, I never did like the society I was born into. Iâ€| I felt it was harsh and unjust. But I was just a child," Trak said quickly, "On my first mission the Mighty Forerunner decided to test my devotion to the Covenant. It was already weak, and I buckled easily under the pressure. For two years I stayed with the humans, learned their ways. And found them to be weak. I realised that all the faults I had found were not with my race, but theirs. One night three humans attacked me, I fought them off and killed two. The humans tried to punish me for it. I delivered justice and they condemned me for it. I hate them!" spat Trak finally.

"By the Gods," one of the two other prophets exclaimed.

"Then you returned to us not out of goodwill, but fear of the humans," the first prophet spoke. It was not a question.

"I could have slaughtered every human on that planet had I wanted to," Trak said slowly, "but I knew that I must return to my people first."

"And why is that?" the prophet asked, a curious gaze appearing on the weathered face.

"Because I had to show the Gods that my devotion had returned."

"You return to us after butchering two units of fine warriors and expect us to take you back with open arms because you say you have found your devotion," shouted the third prophet in anger and

rage.

"Silence!" commanded the first prophet, only this time it was not directed at Trak. All three prophets became quiet for a long time, thinking of what to do with the elite before them.

"You areâ€| truly unique," the first prophet finally said aloud, "never before have we had such a case as yours. We will need you to prove your new found loyalty though."

"As would be expected," Trak replied quietly.

"And you shall have the Mark of Shame burnt upon your flesh," the prophet finished.

"As would beâ€| expected," Trak said once more, his voice faltering slightly.

"Be gone now elite, and do not fail us again, or you shall feel the Gods true wrath."

The two hunters slowly moved forwards, but Trak turned and walked towards them. He held out his hands and felt the two rings appear once more around his wrists. Heading along the corridors once more Trak knew that the worst was still to come, but he did not care. Soon he would be free to prove himself. He would find his father and brothers and make them see that he was not weak anymore. He would be strong, stand tall and fight harder than any other elite in history.

Trak arrived at the prison block once more. The head guard lifted the searing metal rod from its bed of glowing embers and flashed an evil grin at Trak. As the intense heat scarred Traks flesh for life he did not cry out or moan, he showed no pain. This was his first steps towards repaying his sins and he would take every opportunity he got.

## 11. XI

OK, this was a hard chapter for me to write. Not because of it's content, but because of how it's going to influence the overall story. The two paths have begun their journey apart. Enjoy the read. More to come soon.

-

Reconciled Brother

Chapter 11 : Alike Apart

Cain sat silently on his small bed. His new fatigues hung loosely on his frail frame as he placed his head in cupped hands. His new way of life was different for sure he thought. A change, for better or worse he didn't know.

Two days ago he had been filling in forms and doing medical tests, now here he was in a military barracks waiting for his first orders. The doors at the far end of the slate grey room opened with a rough squeak and a young soldier poked his head in, spotting Cain at the

other end he smiled in relief.

"I've been looking for you all over the base. Come on, the Captain wants you," he said without moving.

Cain composed himself before starting towards the door. "I was told to wait here," he said when he came within reach of the man.

"Yeah, but I didn't know that. Besides gave me an excuse to get out of drills for a bit," he replied with a smug grin.

As the pair left the barracks Cain looked around at the base. He had only seen it at night when he arrived, now it was daylight he could see just how extensive it really was. Buildings ran off in every direction, exercise yards and training facilities were scattered about and a lone flagpole stood proud in the centre of it all, the UNSC flag flapping wildly in the wind.

"Name's Tanner by the way, Doug Tanner."

"Johnson, Cain Johnson," Cain replied.

"No fuckin' way! Are you the one that's friends with an elite!" Tanner practically shouted out.

"Was friends with," Cain corrected, the memories he had thought to hold back surging forwards again.

"Sorry man, didn't mean to pry. Iâ€¦ I just talk to much, you know. I'll shut up now," he finished with an embarrassed glance at the floor.

"Don't do that," Cain said, "You're the first person I've properly spoken to in days. I'm going nuts all by myself."

Tanner smiled at looked back at Cain, then his watch. "Oh shit, Wilson's gonna have my ass," he said.

"Who?" Cain asked quickly.

"The Captain. I said I would have you in his office in twenty minutes and that was an hour ago."

"Which way then?" Cain stated simply.

-

Captain Wilson's office was a sparse room, from the clear plastic table to the filing cabinets standing along the walls. The Captain was a well built man, but one who had gone to waste over the years. His haggard face told the tales of hundreds of battles, both from since the Covenant war and before. As Cain walked in he put down the report he was reading and looked up at the new recruit. Cain snapped a crisp salute and announced "Trainee Johnson, reporting as ordered, Sir."

"At ease Johnson," the Captain said, "Take a seat son."

Cain sat down quickly and glanced around the room once more, anything to keep his gaze of the Captain.



"First things first," the Captain said leaning back in his chair, "I know about you and the elite and so does pretty much every man here. We have no secrets in the UNSC so I expect you to answer me honestly now."

The Captain picked up his data pad and looked at the report he was reading once more before turning back to Cain.

"I know why the elite joined you. What I don't know though is why he left? Care to help me?"

"In short, he killed two men Sir. He regretted his actions, but felt he had no choice but to return to his people."

"And you let him leave!" the Captain said.

"Why wouldn't I? Sir," Cain replied, quick to add the declaration.

"He was an enemy and you let him go back. You could have taken him prisoner or anything! But you let him leave."

"He wasn't an enemy Sir. He was my friend."

"He was what! How the hell could a Covie' end up been a humans friend!"

"He wasn't a member of the Covenant Sir, he secured that when he killed two squads of their soldiers. His family."

"Yes, well," the Captain replied looking disgruntled, "I have one more question for you. Could you kill another elite if you came across one?"

"Sir, Trak was a rare elite, he valued humans and protected us. I would kill any other elite quicker than I could blink."

"Very well," said the Captain looking relieved, "I'm assigning you to the Delta team, they're a couple of men short."

"Thank you Sir," Cain said with another salute.

"Dismissed Johnson."

Cain turned quickly and exited the room, sighing with relief when the door slid shut. Tanner was waiting outside, leaning against the wall and whistling a tune, as Cain approached he stood straight and looked at the younger soldier.

"So how'd it go?" he asked curiously.

"He just asked me about the elite, that's all."

"Cool, cool man. So you want the tour of this here base?"

"Sure why not, lead on. By the way, do I have to call you Sir?"

"Only when I'm with an officer," Tanner replied jokingly.

-

The sun was hot, it shone down on the sparsely vegetated ground and radiated back up into the recruits crawling above. Cain raised his hand and made a fist, behind him all movement stopped. Pulling the binoculars up to his eyes Cain surveyed the quickly installed base in front of him, the target.

Training had begun the day after Cain had arrived. It started off with basic drills and exercises. Soon weapon and tactics were brought in, now Cain was a squad leader recruit with twelve recruits under his small command. They were good though, Cain made sure they were good.

Raising his hand once more he pointed his index finger at the base then made a small circle, next he held up three fingers and finally rotated his index finger pointing down. His commands were effective. Three snipers would stay here, or if they had to move stay in view of the target. The rest moved silently, following Cain around the base. They were good.

Crouching behind a small rock Cain held up his left hand and jerked it up and down, check weapons and ammo. Brining his assault rifle and pistol to bear Cain looked over the basic paintball gun replicas. They wouldn't kill, but a few choice regions would bruise like hell and cause severe discomfort. Cain smiled at the thought.

The objective was the company flag held in the centre of the makeshift base. Roughly thirty to fifty guards had been estimated. That meant two choices for Cain; they could either go in full assault and neutralise the guards before they could react or slip in and slip out. The former could incur heavy losses for both sides, the latter would be far harder with a large team.

"Rodriguez, I want you and Dwight to secure the barracks. Infiltration style. Secure them inside and leave a basket," Cain spoke quickly and quietly. The Mexican smirked and looked around at his partner, Dwight was a monster, 250 pounds of tough African American muscle. He was the demo man, there was no competition.

"Sam, Amy and Mark, you hold perimeter. See anything, avoid at all costs. Send word. If absolutely neccersary, make it silent." Cain knew he should of just said make it quiet, but Mark would probably strangle half the camp that way.

"Ethan, you and Riley are coming with me. Hit and Run. No stopping, no shooting unless pinned. Ready?" Cain glanced around at his team, they were the best, they would not let him down. Placing his hand out each of the others placed theirs on his, "Kick ass," they all shouted in a whisper.

Rodriguez and Dwight left first, they moved quickly towards the low lying building that was the marines barracks. Rodriguez was a true marksman and expert at hand to hand combat, he would provide cover for Dwight while he worked. They made a good team and could anticipate each other's moves.

The next unit split up, Sam moving slowly around the low wall, her

long brown hair flopping down from below her helmet. The base was laid out like a square with a building on each side and the flag in the inner courtyard. The two main barracks were being taken care of by Dwight, Sam would check the kitchen and recreation room. Mark was heading straight for the command block, "Typical," Cain thought to himself.

A morning guard came out slowly from the mess hall, rubbing his eyes against the early morning glare. He suddenly disappeared from view as a figure pulled him into the shadows of the building, Sam slowly re-appeared to the scene of the crime. Cain nodded, it was time.

Raising his hand Cain motioned forwards and the trio made their way rapidly to the outer walls of the command block. Inside muted actions could be heard, a gasp and then a clunk as a body fell to the floor unconscious. God, did Mark like his work.

Peering around the edge of the plastic walls Cain scanned the courtyard. Nothing. Cain put his hand up and counted down from three fingers, as the last finger bent down Cain, Ethan and Riley raced across the courtyard. They were halfway to the pole with over a hundred metres still to go when the mess hall doors opened and four guards stepped out, talking and laughing with each other. Their gazes dropped dead when they saw the three recruits. Instantly the one at the back reached for the alarm button at the side of the door. As his hand drew near another one shot forwards and pulled him over the handrail. Sam spun around the corner as the remaining two guards turned on her.

"Shit!" Cain thought to himself, "It was not supposed to go this way." Dropping to the ground he pulled his pistol out and took aim at one of the soldiers, he crumpled to the ground before Cain could even pull the trigger. A loud crack echoed through the air a split second later, the snipers were doing their jobs. The final man screamed and jammed the alarm down, sirens blared and men at rest in peaceful bunks began stirring into action.

Shouts and bangs were heard at the doors to the two barracks, Dwight's barricades were holding for the moment. Crashes were heard at the windows as the men fought to break out, suddenly a minor explosion rocketed through the flimsy plastic building as a paint grenade blew out underneath a window frame.

Cain looked up and around, it was now or never. Resuming his sprint he approached the pole and cut the cord with a knife. The rope spun down, bringing the necessary flag with it. Dropping into a crouch Cain turned back to look at the mayhem. His team were hidden in the early morning shadows, taking out any soldier who tried to move. Suddenly the ground around Cain exploded in torrents of dirt. They were using live ammunition he realised. They were pissed.

A second explosion rang out and the firing stopped. Cain raced back to the mess hall side and whistled as loudly as he could. They hadn't been given radios, the Sergeant wanted to test their abilities he had said. A series of short calls echoed back, an affirmative to his 'complete so retreat' command. Moving back into the rocky hills behind the base Cain made sure all his team was there before signalling for extraction with a green flare. They had done it.

"Hey Dwight," Amy asked with a smirk, "How'd ya' get the paint grenades to go off like that?" Dwight glanced at his hands, "Explosives 101, contain an explosive in a tight casing and it pops with more force. Three of these babies," he said tossing a grenade in the air, "rammed into a thermos flask make a nice combo." Riley and Sam grinned at the explanation, but Mark looked away muttering something about stealth and silence. Cain smiled heartily as the pelican slowly came into view on the horizon.

Dwight sat looking down at the camp, an expression of restlessness on his face. Cain sat next to him slowly, his feet dangling over the ravine below.

"Hey, what's up man?" he said carefully, noticing the frowning gaze on the recruit.

"Nothing Sir, it's just thatâ€¦ well. It's taking to long."

"What? Somethingâ€¦"

Cain was cut off as a final explosion roared from the base of the canyon. The army barracks, now devoid of soldiers, collapsed in a heap of rubble. Dwight's eyes glinted, "Never leave an enemy behind," he said as he sat up and walked over to the others.

Grinning Cain rose as well and followed the others to the drop ship making sure he was the last man onboard.

## 12. XII

Well two updates in the same day. This is mainly because I haven't been able to upload. This is my longest chapter yet and I had good fun writing it, I hope you enjoy it.

As for the story, well, it's really taking off now. I'm not going to spoil anything, but I hope you like the events to come.

Also thank you to Warp Ligia Obscura, my latest reviewer. This is only the end of the beginning, there is still a hell of a lot more to come.

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Reconciled Brother

## Chapter 12 : Academies & Academics

The thin bed was cold, but not as cold as the stares that Trak drew from the brethren around him. He lay back and pulled the thin sheet of material over his bare skin. The whispers began again, slowly rising like a crescendo. The subject of each and every whisper was evident, Trak Basamme.

Trak let his thoughts wander as his mind slowly drifted from reality. He was in the military academy. For the second time. He was older than any recruit in his unit by two whole cycles. The only reason he had been allowed in was because of the Prophets. Tracing his fingers over the fresh burn Trak sighed.

A small object struck the back of Traks head, no doubt thrown by one of the insolent youths. Trak moved slowly, silently. He heard another object fly through the air, the minute whistling picked up by his straining ears. Rolling over quickly Trak caught the small piece of paper in his hand. A recruit on the other side of the room gasped, astonished. Trak rose and quickly crossed the purple floor.

"I believe this is yours. It would do well if you did not throw it again," Trak said slowly to the elite. He was at least half a foot taller than the younger elite and he imposed himself even more by throwing out his chest. The elite looked up coldly into the eyes of the Traitor.

"I do not care that the Prophets allow you back into our society, in My eyes you are a traitor," he said snarling his lower mandibles.

"What you say is heresy. Do you wish to lose your life now? I can make it quick, painless compared to what the Prophets can do," Trak said slowly tracing his finger over the scar on his chest once more.

The elite looked down at the floor, submission evident in every gesture. "I am sorry," he said slowly.

"As am I," Trak said before walking towards the doors of the barracks.

"Where are you going?" the elite questioned, puzzled.

"When I was here we never got enough food. So we practised are stealth at night byâ€| acquiring, more food," Trak grinned slightly.

The elite stepped forwards cautiously, "May Iâ€| May I accompany you?"

"If you are caught, you are by yourself, understand?"

"Absolutely," the elite replied hurriedly, "My name is Iyo Dillar by the way."

As the two approached the door several more elites rose from their beds to follow. It seemed as if the entire company wanted to come.

"This is stupid," Trak said aloud, looking over the group, "And dangerous. Only five shall follow me tonight. We have less chance or being caught. Another five shall go tomorrow and so on. What we bring back we share, same with everyone else. Understand?" Trak finished, feeling as if he was a leader talking to his troops.

"Yes Sir," the assembled elites replied in unison, further compounding the feeling of leadership.

"Who here knows the way to the kitchens?" Trak asked quickly.

A lone elite stepped forwards, an anomaly similar to Trak. "Iâ€| I do Sir," he said timidly.

"Good. I need three more," Trak replied. Instantly every elite stepped forwards. Trak looked over the eager faces, some too eager he thought. Pointing to Iyo and two others who looked stealthy Trak turned to the doors.

"We shall be no more than one unit, any longer and you must all return to your bunks and deny all knowledge of where we have gone."

"Yes Sir," came the reply once more.

"Come," Trak said finally to his team before leaving.

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The hallway was deserted, the entrance to the outside area just beyond the corner. Slipping into the recesses of the corridor Trak moved silently towards the door.

"Which way is it from the door?" he asked the anomaly quietly.

"Two hundred spans to the right of the door. In the main building, at the back."

"How do you know all this," Trak asked.

"I learn quickly, the schematics for this structure are simple. I know every nook and cranny," the anomaly finished with a grin.

"What is your name smart one?" Trak asked, aware that they were wasting time.

"Fera' Kilmanne, and it has been a long time since anyone has praised me, thank you."

"Thank me when we return with our bounty. What would you say is the best way of getting in and out?"

"There is a supply shoot at the rear of the main baking area, the Ungoggy use it to receive deliveries of food. It has no lock and is easily scalable from inside."

"Very nice," Trak replied genuinely impressed. "Do you wish to come inside?" Trak asked, conscious of the fact that Fera may not condone all actions of violence, as Trak had once not. Fera lowered his head and took in a deep breath, before he could reply Trak answered for him, "Very well, you are the lookout. Warn us of any approaching patrols before hiding. Your mind is more valuable than our skill at this moment."

Fera looked up in gratitude, "Thank you," he finally whispered as they approached the door.

Trak slipped silently across the hallway and rested his hand on the door controls. Slowly he opened the small door and looked out across the academy. Deserted except for a few green horn warriors. They rested against the smooth walls of the compound, talking in small groups. The night watch was more a punishment than a duty.

Trak took a final look back at his group and nodded. They slithered

out of the door in a single file towards the far end of the compound. Reaching a corner of the large building Trak waited for the others to reach him. Fera came last, almost out of breath.

"Where now?" Trak asked the panting elite.

Raising a finger Fera pointed towards a small dark panel recessed into the wall of the compound. Trak whistled quietly and motioned two of the elites to the panel. It slid open easily and they looked inside the dark shaft.

"How far does it go?" Trak asked.

"Less than twenty spans at thirty degrees," Fera replied quickly.

"Will you be alright out here," Trak asked finally.

"If I am not, it is my fault," Fera answered moving to look around the corner of the building.

Trak approached the chute and looked down for himself. Fera was right, Trak could already see the bottom.

"Follow me," Trak said before quickly moving into the shaft. He slid down silently and landed like a cat at the bottom. Slipping to his left he made room for Dillar and the others. Looking over the darkened room Trak felt his stomach churn in anticipation.

"Take only what you can carry quickly and quietly. Anyone who takes too much will get the amount dropped deducted from their next raid," Trak said, unsure as to whether or not he should have made the threat. If they did try and take too much they would be slower, more likely to be caught. But taking too little would not please the waiting Sangheili.

Trak moved to the ration storage and looked at the bars, instead he opened the crate to the right and pulled out Arcturian Hamg Snaks. The small animals were very tasty and filling considering their size. Grabbing a piece of cloth Trak wrapped up several of the animals and hung the temporary bag over his shoulder.

Iyo came forwards, a box of Tritits in his hands, Trak shook his head at the box in admiration. Tritits were a highly intoxicating plant, half of the roots could leave a fully grown Hunter sprawled on the floor.

"On your head be it," Trak said reaching for more dishes and delicacies. Finally after only minutes the four were ready to leave. But Trak stopped looking up the shaft, it would be difficult hauling their load up. Maybe even impossible. But a thought struck Traks mind, looking at the shaft Trak glanced around at the group, they were all tall enough he finally reasoned.

"Place your items here," Trak said indicating the ground in front of the shaft, "Iyo, you first. Climb up until you are five spans away from the entrance, call Fera to help you. Then you," Trak said pointing at the second tallest elite, "You go up until you are five spans down from Iyo. And you another five down. We pass the items up like a ladder. Once the last item has passed you can climb out fully.

Any problems?" Trak asked finally, pleased with his plan. Seeing no heads shaking he nodded at Iyo who began his ascent.

The process was very simple and soon boxes and packages of food were moving swiftly up the organic ladder. With their backs wedged against the walls of the shaft hands moved quickly back and forth passing their cargo onto the next rung. Fera stood at the top carefully placing the items of the ground while looking around for patrols. After less than five minutes they were done, Trak the last one to leave the chute.

Picking up his quarry Trak moved to the corner and waited for the others. Fera came up to him and pulled the bag from his shoulder.

"You are better with your hands, let me take the burden," he said quietly.

Nodding Trak released the bag and looked once more around the corner. He nodded and shot out from his hiding place across the courtyard to the door. Opening it up he took a rapid glance inside and motioned for the others to cross. Fera came first, followed the two unnamed elites and finally Iyo. As soon as Iyo cleared the door Trak closed it and followed the others in. The noise was audible before Trak had even rounded the bend. Walking into the room he frowned.

"Silence," he commanded, "We have the food but how long we keep it depends on how much noise you make eating it."

The feast began once more, the food handed out in equal portions to each. One of the two unnamed elites brought over a handful of food for Trak which he took gratefully.

"My name is Akil Baharre," he said while chewing on a plant.

"You moved well tonight Akil," Trak said over his own chewing.

"Tell me," Akil continued looking around at the room before settling his gaze on Trak, "What are they like, the humans?"

"Weak," Trak said with a snort. Akil laughed as well.

"I see brother," he said with a grin.

"You consider yourself a brother to me already?" Trak said with a sardonic glance at the younger elite.

"In this company," Akil said motioning to all the others, "We are all brothers."

"Eat your meal," Trak said walking off to his bunk while receiving many compliments from the assembled elites.

That night Trak slept soundly. No nightmares or horrid visions. No snickers or objects thrown at him. He was a brother to a family he truly belonged in. And it felt like home, finally.

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The morning brought with groans from some of the youngest elites.



Many had not tried Tritits before and so now suffered the inevitable side effects. Trak smirked at himself, it reminded him of the human alcohol. The doors at the end of the barracks opened and the commander walked in, his red armour glistening in the early morning light from the windows set in the walls.

"Up," he shouted at the recruits. At once Trak sprang from his bed and was stood rigidly by the end, arms straight down, face forwards. The commander was called Kanabi Hu' Mhander. He was a long time veteran, but the loss of a leg resigned him into a position of training new warriors. And he hated it. The artificial limb was awkward and not as fast as his previous organic limb. He had once unscrewed it and used it to beat an insolent youth Trak had heard from one of the other recruits.

Stalking down the centre aisle Kanabi stared menacingly at each of the elites. Trak could not decided whether he was normally this mad or if something had pissed him off, like the food. Trak thought quickly though, it could be blamed on the Ungoggy. They could easily be held accountable. The commander stopped in front of Trak, turning to face him.

"Name," he spat in Traks face.

"Trak Basamme, Sir," Trak said keeping his eyes forwards.

"Basamme, Basamme," the commander said trying to remember where he had heard the name before.

"Is your father the great Ruis Basamme?" he asked questioningly.

"Yes Sir," Trak replied quickly.

"And so that would make you the traitorous scum, his third child. Now I know where I had heard the name. The prophets should have given you that mark and then fed you to the Lekgolo," the commander snarled gesturing at the Mark of Shame.

The commander turned away and walked back to the doors. "I want every recruit assembled outside the armoury in less three minutes. Go!" the commander shouted.

Trak took off with all the others, rushing through the door to the outside he looked across the courtyard to the armoury on the other side. Over a thousand spans away, "easy," thought Trak.

Arriving first Trak stood rigidly once more waiting for the commander. The others fell into place behind him. Finally after more than half a unit the commander came walking up to them, he shot an evil gaze towards Trak at the front before opening the door and sending them in.

Inside stood all the weapons and armour they would ever need. Trak looked over the assortment of plasma weapons, pistols, rifles, needlers, grenades. And then the full suits of armour, each one waiting for an occupant.

"Find your armour and don it quickly. No weapons today," the commander said aloud to the recruits.

Trak stepped quickly inside and walked up to the racks of armour, he quickly located his, it was the tallest of the lot. The name tag written in the covenant language identifying him personally. Slipping on the black under suit Trak felt a sense of nostalgia come to him. The last time he had worn this he was on the planet that sent him on his path so far it took two cycles to get back on. Slipping the gleaming blue metal pieces of the armour on Trak carefully checked each piece. It was perfect.

Stepping out of the armoury Trak stretched his muscles and tried to become re-acquainted to the weight and limits of the armour. It felt a lot lighter than before and Trak felt as if he was bigger than his armour, rather than how it had felt before. The commander still stared at Trak as he moved around the recruits.

Finally the other recruits were all ready, each looking down at his armour and testing their movements.

"Follow me," the commander ordered as he walked towards a path in the forest walls. Eventually the large group reached a clearing filled with artificial rocks, mounds, metal walls and other assorted obstacles. The commander turned around and faced his troopers.

"Somewhere in here is a very important object to me. It is a ceremonial blade. This group of soldiers," the commander said pointing towards the obstacle course first and then a collection of elites, jackals and grunts, "will be guarding it. Your task is to retrieve that dagger. Ghost plasma only. If you are hit stay down."

The commander turned to the fake soldiers and nodded, at once they moved out into the obstacle course to get ready. Returning to the recruits he kicked a box next to him. It opened with a jerk revealing yellow plasma pistols and rifles. The ghost plasma looked realistic but caused no damage on impact. Perfect for training. At once all of the elites rushed forwards to grab a weapon. Trak reached over and removed a rifle, checking the sight on it.

Walking around behind the group the commander watched as the recruits armed themselves. Finally he roared, the sign to begin, and walked off into the trees. Probably to an observation point Trak thought.

Some of the elites rushed forwards immediately but Trak called them back.

"If we are to succeed, we must work together, as a team. As brothers," Trak said to the assembled recruits. There were twenty one in total, more than enough to overwhelm this enemy, if used correctly.

"Seven is the holy number and we will use it today. Three teams, each of seven. I will lead Gold team, we will proceed straight through the course. Iyo, you pick six others and form Silver team, take the right flank. Stay hidden and attack on my command. Akil, you shall take Red team. Same as Iyo only you take the left flank. Let's go," Trak said finally.

The commander watched from his perch. Usually the young and arrogant recruits just swarmed the base, many failing. But this Basamme seemed to pull them together. True he had prior experience, but he was supposed to be a coward and a traitor. Kanabi had seen neither trait so far, not even in their raid on the kitchens the night before.

Trak moved forwards swiftly using the large obstacles as cover. As silver and red team moved around the edges Trak fired several shots over the top of the rock he was hidden behind to draw attention away from the flanks. A volley of plasma suddenly erupted lancing the top of the rock but causing no damage to the elites.

Slinking forwards once more Trak looked between a crack in two rocks at the awaiting base. It was dug half into the ground, small windows lining the sides. Enemies could be seen eagerly awaiting their prey. But something struck Trak. There was no visible form of entry. The roof was perfectly flat, there were no doors, nothing. Pulling back he spoke to another elite telling him to carry on forwards. The elite looked confused at first at his commanders cowardness, but decided to press on.

Trak circled around the entire course, passing Iyo on his way. The elite looked surprise as well, but Trak silenced him and continued his journey. At the far side of the course Trak found what he was looking for. A small ramp appeared behind a large rock, almost hidden completely from view. Facing the course Trak let out a roar and then moved back to the ramp. From behind and in front the sound of rushing plasma filled Traks ears. A grunt ambled past in the corridor, Trak smacked it to the ground quickly.

An enemy elite rounded the corner, Trak dropped to the floor and emptied his weapon into the beast until it over heated. The elite looked down at its chest before deciding to lie down. Picking up the elites rifle as well Trak moved forwards once more.

He had reached it, the bunker, Trak thought as he looked down the corridor. Two more plasma rifles and a plasma pistol were attached to his armour now and he knew he would need them. All of the enemies were fighting avidly out of the windows, not one looking behind. Trak took a deep breath and sneaked up to the entrance way.

Within seconds Trak had unloaded the entire battery of his two main rifles into the room. Before he could even breath he brought the second pair up to bear and repeated his volley, taking out all of his enemies. Dropping the searing weapons Trak moved in cautiously. A growl, from behind, Trak whirled. A red elite stood behind the entrance, a rifle held securely in its hands.

Trak dived as the plasma rushed past. He reached for his plasma pistol and held the trigger down while it was still in its holster. The weapon grew hot, as did Traks leg. Playing dead Trak waited while the elite cautiously stepped forwards. Trak spun on the ground, his feet knocking the elites out from under itself. Trak jumped up and raced to the elite. Holding the overcharging plasma pistol near it's face Trak grinned, before unleashing the ghost plasma.

Movement outside. Trak twirled snatching up a rifle lying on the ground. Akil appeared in one of the narrow windows. He looked at the devastation in the room before grinning at Trak.

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Commander Mhander's office was located in the central command block. Trak stood with as much control as he could in front of the commander. Eventually the commander looked up at Trak.

"The soldiers playing your enemies tell me you were the one who raided their base. The soldiers on your side tell me you were the one who lead them," Kanabi said slowly.

Trak blinked nervously, what did the commander want with him he thought desperately. They had won, he should be congratulating the company.

"Well, what do you have to say for yourself?" the commander continued.

"A full assault would not have worked Sir," Trak said quickly, "I knew we had to be more cunning. I didn't break any rules Sir. We won."

"Yes," the commander replied, "Yes, you did win. And I must say with the least casualties of any unit. Well done," the commander said looking Trak straight in the eyes.

"Thank you Sir," Trak answered, feeling more confident by the minute.

"I have been watching the way the others in your unit respect you and follow your command. I am offering you the position of squad leader. Do you want it?" the commander asked finally.

"Sir, it would be an honour to lead these warriors into battle in the name of the Covenant."

"Good, then leave and prepare your troops. You will have your first true test in one week. There are some heretics the Prophets want taken care of and I feel it would be a good training op for the young recruits."

"Thank you Sir," Trak said one last time before leaving, a smile bursting forth inside. Squad leader, he had command, power. He had been accepted and now given command.

### 13. XIII

OK, I know I haven't updated for over 3 months, but I've been finishing all of my 2 years worth of coursework, and I am just coming to a close on all my end of year exams (for any Brits I'm doing GCSEs). So just to keep you happy here's the next chapter. I started writing this straight after the previous one and have added to it paragraph by paragraph over the weeks. It's not as long as I wanted it to be, but at least it shows that I'm still alive.

Enjoy it, because there is a LOT more to come " In three days time I finish school & have an 11week holiday!

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## Reconciled Brother

### Chapter 13 : The Brother of my Brother isâ€

The air rushed by, the superheated crack ringing out for miles, audibly crashing against the surface of the lush planet below. The thin metal skin of the orbital drop shock pod glowed and began to peel back, exposing the vulnerable life within.

The chute above tugged at the metal frame, slowly bringing the pod to more manageable speeds. The air stopped whistling so harshly, the metal skin was no more. Around the first pod, nine others plummeted onwards and ever downwards. The metal bullets of rain lanced through the sky a final moment before the reverse thrusters kicked in. The sudden upward jolt brought the pods to an almost upwards direction, but were silenced as they landed upon the surface of the planet.

ODST Lieutenant Johnson stepped gingerly out of his pod and looked around at his assembled troops, or at least the ones in visible sight. His men had been scattered over the rolling hillsides, they would soon find their way to him though. That was the plan. Surveying the area Cain breathed in the sweet air of the new world. His first off-world mission leading a squad into actual combat. It wasâ€ exhilarating.

A crackle came through Cain's in ear mic and Riley reported in, he had found Ethan and Mark and they were converging on base HQ. The minutes passed quickly and soon the entire team was assembled in front of Cain. His team, it had still didn't sound true.

"OK people, this is for real now. No more training sims, no more dummy targets. We will be taking on the Covies on their own ground. They've captured a city no more than two miles from here and will probably be ready for us," he said quickly, gazing into each set of eyes.

"Good," Dwight muttered, "Wouldn't want to get em when they're sleeping, where's the fun in that."

The others grinned at his remark before looking back at Cain.

"What's the op, Sir?" Rodriguez asked first.

"Search and Destroy. Find any civvies, we evac em. Find any covies," Cain hefted his battle rifle and chambered the first round, "we do what we do best."

"Yes Sir," came the unanimous reply.

"Load up and move out," Cain said finally.

Within moments the unit was ready, each member having his or her weapon ready for immediate use.

"Which way?" Cain asked Sam quickly.

"Bearing 105 degrees, this way LT," she answered after a brief

pause.

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They moved silently through the dense woodlands. Sam's directions kept them on course and Ethan's eyes scanned the surrounding vegetation. Cain glanced at his chronometer, they had travelled just over a mile and a half in under twenty minutes. Not bad considering the terrain he thought.

In the distance the skyline of Juventis city loomed, growing larger with each moment. Above hovered a giant Covenant cruiser, the blue energy glows radiating in the evening light above the city. Suddenly Ethan's hand shot up in a balled fist; stop.

Cain slipped forwards towards his point man and looked at the spot Ethan's gaze was fixed on. Three grunts were standing lazily in the middle of a small clearing. Their strange chattering echoed in the still trees. Holding up three fingers Cain pointed towards the grunts and then jolted his hand up and down. Time to kill.

Stepping forwards Cain avoided putting any weight on the thin twigs. Taking up position against a large tree trunk he brought his rifle to bear and sighted the aliens. Mark and Amy appeared beside him. With a soft squeeze of the trigger Cain let of a three shot burst instantly lacerating the throat of the closest grunt. Moments later Mark and Amy's rifles coughed in the woods. The three bodies fell to the ground in a heap, their methane tanks leaking out their precious gas.

"Quick, we're getting closer. Ethan scout ahead, stay in radio contact," Cain ordered.

"Aye sir," Ethan whispered before disappearing into the foliage.

"Move up," Cain said to the rest of his troops. At once the unit moved forwards, soon Cain's mic clicked.

"What is it?" he asked quickly.

"The wood stops two hundred feet ahead Sir, clear ground up to the city walls. We're either gonna have to sneak real slow or sprint it," Ethan replied.

"Enemy contact?" Cain inquired after a break.

"None that I can spot. Banshee fliers are circling in the distance, not sure how far they can scan for hostiles."

"Affirmative, hold position until we arrive," Cain said finally before increasing his pace.

They covered the ground rapidly and approached Ethan's hidden position. He looked up at the sound of approaching movement but returned his watch to the flat ground before him when he identified the friendlies. Cain lay prone next to him and raised his binoculars to scan the horizon.

"That storm drain," Ethan said quietly, "Thirty degrees East, see it

Sir?"

"Yeah," Cain replied, already knowing what Ethan was about to say.

"I figure it's our best way in. If we can get there undetected."

"If," Cain repeated looking out over the fields. The thin grass rose about a metre and swayed gently in a light breeze. Perfect cover thought Cain, as long as the God dammed flyboys didn't pick them up on thermal.

"Ok people, we've done stealth before. Target is just under a quarter of a mile away. I'll go first. Stay low and move with the grass remember. See you in a few."

With that Cain bent low and began a quick jog across the fields, he could hear the banshees in the air and the rustle of the team behind him, but focused all his energies on making it across undetected.

The entrance was just ahead now, the high wall above providing reassuring cover. This whole area looked like it had once been a riverbed, now long since dried up. Hopefully the shore wasn't too boggy. Suddenly alien sounds could be heard up ahead, glancing upwards Johnson saw shadows flirting on the edge of the wall. Covie Patrols were moving in this area and they had been unlucky enough to run into one.

Moving more cautiously now, Cain brought his rifle up to his chin and carefully took aim above the wall, just in case. A crash shattered the tranquil silence and Cain spun to see Sam trip and slam into the bedrock. Her gun clattered to the ground with a loud crunch, which seemed to echo on forever. Up above on the wall the shadows moved more rapidly closing in on their position. Cain spun once more to face the wall and activated the digital scope of the rifle. Two jackal heads appeared in the targeting reticule, taking quick aim Cain drew a breath, let half out, held it and fired twice in quick succession. The bodies could be heard dropping to the ground. Never taking his gaze from the wall Cain motioned for his team to move up quickly. They were sure to have brought unwanted interest from nearby parties.

Dwight came trotting up to the front and crouched next to the grate. After a quick once over of the solid metal he reached into his pack and pulled out a small can similar to biofoam. But this stuff would not help you seal a hole, much the opposite. Holding down the nozzle Dwight ran the can around the edge of the circular opening, leaving a trail of expanding orange foam in its wake. When he had completed the full 360 he put the can back in his pack and removed a tiny cylinder. Twisting the top slightly he depressed it down until it clicked then pushed it into the orange foam. Backing up he motioned for everyone else to do the same.

The small cylinder emitted a small beep before the orange foam glowed with a blinding flash and sizzled back into the wall with a quiet crunch. The corrosive foam had done its work, quietly, for which Cain was grateful. The large grate fell forwards into the hands of Mark and Rodriguez who placed it carefully next to the now open

tunnel.

Cain quickly peered around the edge into the gloomy tunnel. It extended for as far as he could see, pin pricks of light shafting through the darkness from overhead covers every few metres. No obvious signs of movement, but then none would be expected.

"OK, looks clear," he announced to the team, "let's get moving before any more patrols come. Ethan, take point. Dwight, cover our asses."

The going was slow. The low ceiling forced Cain and his team to assume a half crouch position, not ideal for rapid or stealthy movements. Up ahead another grating let the last few rays of daylight down into the tunnel. According to the mission chrono they had been travelling for over an hour. Up ahead Ethan looked cautiously up the narrow shaft, seeing no danger he moved on.

Cain knew they were near the objective now. The residential district of this particular city was to the north, yet they were headed east from their current position. Some of Cain's team had realised this, continually looking down north facing tunnels expecting the captain to change direction. But before anyone could voice any concerns Cain stopped at a large intersection, telling the rest of the squad to do the same.

"OK, change of plans," Cain announced, his team groaned, "Dwight give me the SHA-1, the rest of you, move up this tunnel to the res area." Cain motioned with his gun to the north passage.

"Where are you going Sir," one of the team asked quickly. Taking the small backpack device from Dwight and securing it in his own rucksack, Cain looked up at the assembled team.

"I'm gonna get court-martialled for this, but ONI has a job for me. It seems they've left something behind here, something the Covenant want," Cain said with a grin, "and I'm here to make sure we don't share."

"Sir, permission to come with you, Sir" Riley said before anyone else could offer. Cain's smile widened.

"Sorry, but permission denied. You all know what I'm going into. You just get those civilians to the drop ship. If I'm not back by 0400 hours, leave. That's an order," Cain said wiping the grin from his face.

Taking one final look at his assembled troops, Cain nodded and said "Move out people."

As each soldier turned and left up the north passage they each saluted the captain, some saluting, some just nodding in a solemn kind of way.

When they were all on their way Cain turned himself and looked down the south passage. It certainly seemed a lot darker by himself. Having confidence in his team, Cain moved down.

The voices grew louder now, inhuman, alien, evil. Cain flirted the orange shaft of light cast by a streetlight down the grate. He was



close, very close. Remembering his ONI instructions Cain began looking along the walls for the control panel. ONI never built a facility without at least one emergency exit. Or entrance in this case.

As Cain's hands brushed over a smooth glass display it winked to life underneath the thick layer of dust and grime. Suppressing a smile he began to type in the authorisation codes he had into the small display. Upon entering the last character the screen blinked for a few seconds before flashing green. A wall next to the panel slid back on silent runners, revealing a passage of the side of the new entrance.

Taking a final glance each way, Cain moved into the new tunnel and closed the door behind him, the faint hiss the only give away that a six tonne block of titanium-A reinforced concrete had slid slowly back into place.

After five minutes of careful walking Cain entered the next security block. In front of him stood a massive vault door reminiscent of 21st century design. The large circular opening had a dozen metal cylinders jutting out into the wall. Another touch screen lay waiting to the right of the door. Cain moved up quickly and began inputting more strings of letters and numbers. After a small pause the inner workings of the door began retracting themselves from the walls. With a silent and near fluid motion the door swung out towards to Cain, revealing the inner workings of the ONI Installation.

Cain immediately moved forwards to a computer terminal, unhooking his wrist PDA and linking it to the mainframe. After a bit of negotiation Cain got a floor plan of the entire building, security reports and the location of the AI Core Access Office; his target.

Suddenly as Cain was about to remove the PDA something flashed on the map, a tiny red dot. Engaging a wireless link Cain moved like a cat around the office until he was right next to the red dot on the map, he himself shown as a blinking orange dot. There was nothing here though, Cain did a 180 and came back to staring at the map.

Slowly, Cain looked upwards, from above came the sound of heavy footfalls and weapons fire; plasma weapons. The Covenant had infiltrated the building. Hurriedly returning to the emergency exit Cain pulled from his backpack the SHA-1 device. The incendiary device was enough to initiate the buildings failsafe fire protocols, flooding the structure with Halon gas. Cain quickly took another glance at the digital map and headed for the elevator.

Prying open the doors he snapped a glow stick and let it fall down the shaft. It fell. And fell. And fell. Sighing to himself Cain pulled out his micro-rappel unit and snapped it onto his harness first and then the closest cable. Then removing another device he placed it on the floor and hit a button. Four shots rang out as it fired bolts into the ground beneath it. Grabbing a rope from the top of it, he attached that to his harness as well. Letting his feet leave the safety of the office floor Cain hung suspended over the chasm below him. Three hundred feet to the first sub-level, then another two hundred before his destination.

Taking one last breath Cain squeezed the clamp and he began falling, faster and faster. A digital meter on the rappel unit counted how far

he had travelled. 100. 200. 300 feet. After 400 Cain began releasing pressure on the clamp and his descent slowed. Just as the meter ticked over to 500 feet Cain came to a perfect stop. Removing both cables from his harness Cain looked at the doors and another panel. This one needed only a small code, but the noises from above reverberated down the lift shaft putting Cain on edge.

As the panel blinked green and the door opened Cain quickly scanned the new opening with his rifle. His map showed nothing on this level, but Cain would never fully trust a machine. Pulling himself up he looked across the wide hall to a door at the far end. Unlike every other door on this floor, the stark steel plate that made up the access to AI-CAO looked daunting. Almost running to the panel Cain entered the last code, an almighty beast of a pass phrase. As the door clunked open Cain brought out a tiny disk from his chest pocket, moving into the gloom of the office Cain made no attempt to turn the lights on, he would be done soon. Placing the disk into a brightly marked slot Cain watched a near by screen light up. On its display words flashed by, meaningless at first.

AI-CAO ACCESS / OPEN SSH ACCESS

NEG 255.127 / INT EMER PRT AZ99

AI-CAO ACCESS / PERM GRANT

AI-CAO ACCESS / BEGINNING AI PURGING PROCESS

A progress bar appeared beneath the text and Cain watched it crawl across the screen, at this rate it would take at least ten minutes to complete and Cain knew he had to stay and retrieve the disk. It would hold the files deemed most important and critical for evacuation. Cain smirked, files deemed worthy of evacuation.

Suddenly the elevator shaft shook, Cain ran to the door and peered around the edge. Rubble was falling down, it looked like a set of lift doors. Cursing Trak glanced at his map display. It was dead. Cursing again Cain realised that only base functions would remain now the AI was dying, lighting, heat, emergency protocols. Advanced sensor readings and wireless data streams were hardly critical.

From the lift a dull thump echoed outwards. Cain peered around the edge but immediately pulled his head back. He swore he had seen something. Suddenly a blue beam passed across the room, scanning for anomalous surfaces. Cain knew it must be a scout robot or similar.

Looking at the computer display once more Cain saw the bar was only at 15. Picking up a disk case Cain held it at an obtuse angle so he could see around the edge of the door. A small purple turtle like device lay on the carpet of the hall. Tilting the case more Cain saw what he least wanted to see. Two elites were walking out from the lift. They each held a plasma rifle and looked ready to fight.

Cain took a last a glance at the monitor (30) and pulled two fragmentation grenades from his belt. Kissing them each once he pulled the pins silently and then counted to three. Releasing one grenade he rolled it towards the left of the corridor. A split second later its brother rolled up on the right side.

The two elites looked down and before they could even comprehend what the small brown balls were they were thrown into each other by the force of the twin blasts. Cain leaned low around the edge of the door and fired three shots into each elites unprotected face.

New noises were heard now, lots more. Returning to the safety of the room Cain looked at the display, 75, nearly there Cain thought to himself. Peeking around the corner again Cain yelped in surprise as the disc case was blown out of his hand by an unseen foe.

Cain quickly placed his gun against the edge of the door and let loose a volley of lead. The surprised occupants had nowhere to hide and took a fair few hits, but their shields took the brunt of the force.

The computer beeped loudly in the still aftermath. Cain looked up hopefully at the screen and saw it winking at him.

AI-CAO ACCESS / PURGE COMPLETE

AI-CAO ACCESS / PRIORITY 5 DUMP COMMENCE

Cain swore out loud as another progress bar appeared, this one moved much quicker, but it was still another encumbrance. Pulling another grenade from his belt, Cain sprayed a fresh round of bullets into the aliens before rolling it out. As the blast took down the new foes Cain ran forwards, grabbed the now completed disk and ran out through the corridor.

Clipping on only the second rope Cain looked up, in the distance more figures were abseiling down towards him. Grinning Cain remote activated the high speed accelerator of the second device and began his rapid ascent. As he passed the next set of aliens his eyes locked onto one. That face, Cain knew it.

As the aliens continued on below powerless to climb back up Cain whispered downwards "Trak?"

-

200 feet from the surface Cain pulled another remote from his pocket, the SHA-1s. Even from 150 feet he could feel the blast wave. Pulling on his gas mask from his backpack Cain levelled his rifle and faced the direction of the approaching doors, a fresh clip of ammo just waiting to fly.

The office floor came into view. Great jets of gas billowing down from the ceiling. Elites and Jackals lay writing on the ground, Cain felt no remorse for them. Grunts ran around wildly not knowing what to do, their private methane supplies the only reason they lasted so long. As Cain walked between the desks he smacked the grunts to the floor, rupturing their precious life giving tanks.

With a smirk Cain arrived at the exit and opened the door. Walking out with a powerful stride Cain sealed the door and began his quick jog back to the pelican.

Suddenly in the darkness a shadow moved. Cain spun, his back pressed against the wall. Looking around the slight bend in the tunnel he saw hunched shapes coming closer. Pulling his last grenade from his belt

Cain took one last look before removing the firing pin. As he swung around the strut in the wall Cain almost tripped trying to hold on to the grenade. Riley came out of the shadows, his gun pointed at his CO. When he saw the grenade in his commanders hand he grinned.

"What Sir, you thought I was a dam covey."

Cain just shook his head and placed the pin back into the grenade before securing it to his belt.

"I thought my orders were clear soldier," Cain replied with his own wry grin.

"Sorry Sir, I must be going deaf," Riley replied banging the side of his helmet.

"Come on," Cain said moving forwards, "Did you get the civies out?"

"Affirmative Sir, we found a whole bunch in a church, mostly kids and women. The others are leading them out."

"Good, good" Cain replied still keeping one eye out for trouble, "Any problems?"

Even though Cain was in front of Riley he could feel the soldier lower his head. "Mark got stuck defending the last of the survivors. Before he could make it in the tunnel the Covenant hit the church with some kind of mortar. He escaped the blast, butâ€¦ but the tunnel collapsed in on him."

Cain looked away; he had to be strong now, for his men. "He died a hero's death, that's all we can ask." Cain knew it sounded corny, but the greatest sacrifice a soldier could give was his life.

"So Sir," Riley said trying to change the subject, "Your OP?"

"Completed, you know that's all I can say."

"Yes, Sir," Riley replied forming another grin, "But how many covey you get?"

"A whole building full," Cain said breaking into a smile. Behind him he heard Riley swear in jealousy and the smile widened.

#### 14. XIV

I was going to leave this chapter till later in the story, but I feel the story is ready for it. Hope you like this chapter, not too long and the action is pretty short, but it gives way to a lot more.

Don't forget to review as well!

-

Reconciled Brother

## Chapter 14 : Forsaken

Trak moved quickly across the smooth floor leading to the Prophets chambers. Gone was his arrogant power, his self-confidence, he had failed the Prophets again. He could only hope for a swift and honourable death.

Thinking back to the small planet Trak cursed himself for not anticipating the humans. His order had been simple, to eliminate the humans and retrieve their AI intact; giving them the location of the humans home world.

Trak had lead the assault, sending a few of his men down to the abandoned control room while he kept watch above; mainly to stay in radio contact with the other forces.

When the shots came Trak reacted on instinct, ordering his best men to the shaft they began to descend. From below another round of explosions had taken out more of his warriors; the humans would pay Trak had thought angrily.

And then it happened; Trak saw the face that came to him at night when he lay awake in his small quarters. Cain.

For a fleeting moment Trak wasn't sure whether he was hallucinating, he hadn't seen Cain for over two years. But then a voice carried down towards Trak, a silent whispering audible only by his acute hearing; his name. Cain had called out his name to the silent shaft.

By the time he returned to the main floor a seen of devastation awaited him. The human, Cain, had activated some sort of emergency self-defence system; brethren lay dead upon the ground. Their lungs starved of the precious oxygen needed for life. The grunts told stories of a crazy human who strode through, his face obscured by mask and rage.

Looking up at the grand doors to the Prophets chambers Trak seethed inside. Cain had killed his brothers. What was the expression Cain had always told him; don't get mad, get even. As Trak passed the honour guards he swore there and then, by the great Gods he would have his revenge.

The room was large. Massive. Trak felt insignificant standing inside these hallowed walls. All around him the honour guards stood, their ceremonial blades glinting next to their ornate armour. Ahead the Prophet of Mercy sat in his seat, hovering above the immaculate floor.

"You may rise," the Prophet said with a commanding voice.

Trak rose at once, keeping his head lowered, not daring to look at the Prophet.

"Tell me Sangheili, do you like the humans."

"No, your Excellency," was all Trak could say in reply. He knew his fate was decided long ago.

"Then why do you persist in aiding them," Mercy stated more than asked, "Many said we were lenient allowing a warrior back into our

casts after what he had done. They said he would be weakened by his time with the humans, their thoughts poisoning his own. Now I see they were right," the Prophet finished.

Trak held his tongue, he knew enough to only speak when asked to. Mercy sensed this looking down at the elite, what an interesting life it had lead. What a short life it had lead.

"You know our great Covenant does not tolerate failure. You also know your punishment. May the Gods forgive you young one. Guards, take him away."

Trak let his head hang lower, two guards in red armour moved over to him quickly, as they grabbed his arms Trak looked up into the Prophets eyes.

"I will not leave my fate to the Gods," Trak whispered quietly. Mercy's eyes widened as he heard, the crown upon his bony head slipping slightly.

"What did you say," he asked raising a long finger at Trak.

"I know who killed my brethren, if I am to die, let me die with honour, let me kill this human." The Prophet stared at Trak for a long time before speaking again, quietly, as if it pained him to do so.

"You have failed the Gods twice before, you cannot succeed. Take him, take him away now!" Mercy almost screamed at the guards. Gripping Trak's arms they lead him away from the Prophet in silence.

As they walked down the hallways Trak thought about what had passed, his current predicament, but also what was to come. Suddenly he stopped, the guards who were merely steering him jerking to a halt at his sides.

"What are you doing weakling, move!" the lead guard growled.

"You call me weak," Trak replied turning to face the speaker, his voice cold and arrogant. The guard behind him pushed Trak to the ground with a laugh. The two other guards merely watched with grins on their face.

"I think that proves it," the first guard said bending down until his face was mere inches from Traks own. Suddenly, without warning Trak spun on the ground, his legs swinging around and dropping the guard to the floor. Leaping over him Trak planted a solid hoof in the guards' throat while slipping out the inactive plasma sword all royal guards carried. The other two elites stepped back in shock, each reaching for their own plasma sword as the commander struggled to breath on the ground.

Flicking the small recessed switch on the hilt of the sword a beautiful and deadly ark of plasma shot outwards. In the dim hallway the eerie glow threw Trak's features into harsh relief. He looked psychotic.

One of the elites rushed forwards, Trak raised the blade and blocked his swipe, immediately countering with a low slice. The guard twisted his body and avoided the blow, moving off to the other side so that

Trak was in the middle of the two elites.

Trak rotated slowly on the spot; the dying commander, angry guards, deserted corridor. Turning to face the guard who had kicked him in the back Trak's smile widened. He ran forwards, sword held in front of him. The guard raised his sword instinctively ready to block the attack. Without warning Trak spun and ran as fast as he could the other way. The second guard had been charging up behind Trak, the sudden move caught him by surprise. Traks' blade cleanly severed the guards' head as he rushed past.

The lone guard looked down at the tumbling corpse, the neck sizzling from the heat of the blade. He looked down at his own sword, then the heretic elite.

"You will pay," he said with an ominous growl.

"We all do, in the end," Trak said holding his stance next to the body. Turning around he began to walk down the corridor, the plasma reflecting off the walls. Twisting his head slightly more Trak saw the reflection of the elite, his sword hanging low. Then it happened, in a blur. The reflection jerked, running as fast it could towards Traks own reflection.

Spinning with a violent force Trak spun completely on the spot, his sword flying out of his hand halfway with a deadly velocity. Turning leisurely Trak looked at the warrior. The plasma sword was stuck firmly in his chest, the blade burning away at his insides. As he fell to his knees Trak looked into his solemn face, "We all do," he whispered returning to his walk.

Trak was jogging now, he had to hurry, he wouldn't be missed long. He could see the docks ahead, the assortment of ships awaiting his presence. Behind him he could hear heavy footsteps, a lot of footsteps. Picking up the pace Trak entered the first air lock he came to. Cycling through the narrow passage he boarded the small craft.

Sealing the door Trak looked at the myriad of controls. It was his brothers who were good pilots Trak thought ironically. From the aft of the ship the door shook with many immense poundings. Grabbing hold of the single manual flight control Trak gently nudged it forwards. All around him the ship shook, a holo panel to his right lit up; "Warning, docking clamps not disengaged." Trak scanned the panels and eventually hit a button marked "docking clamps". A moment later the blinking message vanished.

Pushing the stick with more force Trak felt the ship lurch forwards. Banking to the right he looked through the large view port towards High Charity. Trak looked across the control board once more but could not find what he needed. Taking a wild guess he hit an unlit holo panel. It sprang to life instantly and displayed the text Trak wanted most of all, Slipspace drive. Feeling a rush of relief Trak began inputting co-ordinates to his next destination.

Suddenly the whole ship jerked forwards with a massive explosion, the main display panel flashed up a new warning, "Enemy fire, suggest emergency manoeuvres." Great Trak thought, first time flying and he's in a dogfight. Leaving the Slipspace panel for a moment Trak placed both hands on the small stick and pushed it as far forwards as it

would go. The ship shot through space, the immense surface of High Charity rushing by next to the small craft. A screen recessed into the main board showed Traks ship and the pursuers. Rolling to the right he came dangerously close to the city. Throttling back on the speed he piloted the ship closer to the metal skin of High Charity. Behind him the fighter craft stopped firing for fear of hitting their beloved home. Seeing a circular shaft up ahead in the walls Trak had less a second to decide. Plunging into the inner workings of the city he put on a burst of speed, rolling and banking around in an effort to avoid the strange structures criss-crossing the tunnel. The radar screen pinged, contact lost. Trak's mind screamed in celebration, one down, three to go. Entering a clear section of tunnel Trak started tapping in more co-ordinates to the Slipspace drive. As he finished the panel beeped for a few seconds before becoming silent. Trak looked back at the view port and held his breath as he dropped just below a particularly large piece of metal. Behind him one of the fighters was not so lucky.

Shooting out of the tunnel Trak pointed the ship star wards and engaged the slip drive. The feeling of intense speed came over him once more, but this time he was getting away from danger.

Breathing for the first time in five minutes Trak fell back against the cool seat, blissful sleep overcoming him.

"We all pay," his mind whispered before embracing darkness.

Entering the expansive room Omabi stood erect before the Prophet of Mercy.

"Your Excellency, I came with haste at your call," he spoke proudly.

"Yes, yes," the Prophet muttered before looking up at the elite, "The great Covenant needs your services Basamme. Are you prepared to fight for us?"

Omabi was shocked; the Prophet had spoken to him by name and offered him a very special mission. It was honour beyond anything he could have imagined.

"Excellency, I am prepared to die for you."

"Good, a heretic has escaped justice, we have selected you to hunt him down and kill him. Go, you shall be given your orders outside."

With that the Prophet turned and entered his inner sanctum. Leaving with a head as big as High Charity itself Omabi faced the Gold clad commander waiting outside.

"You are Basamme?" he questioned, staring intently at Omabi.

"Yes Sir," he replied quickly.

"Here is your mission, docking bay 27, you leave in twenty units," the elite said before walking away. Omabi looked down at the data pad, he read through it quickly.

Escaped heretic, hunt, kill, report back. Then his eyes fell upon the



name of the condemned. Omabi looked up into the Prophets Chambers; they wanted him to kill his own brother.

## 15. XV

Sorry for the really long time its taken me to update but I have been super busy. Thanks to my latest reviewer, you started me off again. This chapter is fairly short and there is very little action but it sets off the next chapter, which I'm already writing.

Enjoy.

-

Reconciled Brother

Chapter 15 : Brothers Past & Passed - Part I

The small craft sped through space towards its destination, the sole occupant lying back against the cushioned seat, slowly twirling a small blade in his fingers. Outside the view port all Trak could see was darkness, tiny pinpricks of light the only measure of distance. The Slip-space drive hummed in the aft of the ship, a rhythmic purr that put Traks mind at rest, so he could plan what he had to do next.

Cain.

Cain must die. The thought echoed around Trak's head as if it was the only thing in the Universe that mattered. But for Trak it was the only thought. Trak had got his life back on course and then Cain had to come and ruin it all. Well this time Trak would get his revenge.

He had no way of finding out exactly where Cain was, but he could easily draw him out. Everyone has a weakness, just waiting to be exploited.

The console screen beeped, the harsh sound jolting Trak from his slumber. He was about to exit Slip-space. Reaching for the control stick he tapped a few buttons and the slurred lines of stars resumed their precise positions. Engaging the scanners Trak quickly located the planet he wanted and set a course.

Ahead a small ball of rock grew in size until it filled the entire view port. The lush green hills and swirling blue oceans looked beautiful from this height. Small pockets of artificial structures were dotted around the surface, those on the dark side of the terminator glinting from the many artificial lights. Entering the atmosphere Trak headed towards one of the smaller cities, the memories in his head guiding him to where he needed to go. Although many years had passed he could still recall the general location of his previous home on this planet. His life was just beginning the last time he came to this planet, now he came to finish it.

-

The Triumphant Glory moved through space, its massive frame

supporting over a hundred million tonnes of reinforced metal bristling with state-of-the-art weaponry.

Captain Anderson stood on the bridge, vast banks of monitors complementing the enormous external windows. He rested his hands on the main control panels and let out a sigh, he hadn't slept in over two days, his crew even longer.

"Sir, Slipspace ruptures detected around Sigma Octanus IV, unsure of numbers yet. FLEETCOM reports that we are nearest to the system," an ensign to his side reported.

"Ship status?" the captain inquired, already knowing that they would have to go into battle, even with a limp.

"Main super MAC cannon at 85, all archer missile pods have been restocked, decks E and F have breaches along the port side, but they have been sealed off. Slipspace drive at 50, engineering says any more and it'll blow. Manoeuvring thrusters unresponsive.

"Great," Anderson muttered, "Set a course Hawkins, tell engineering I need 75 on that drive if we're going to have a chance of saving those people."

"Aye Sir," Hawkins replied, leaving the Captain alone once more. Looking down at long-range sensor reports Anderson contemplated what actions he would take. The most recent data showed only two ships, a small light transport vessel and a military frigate. An unusual pairing he thought.

"Sir, engaging Slipspace drive now, Estimated Time of Arrival one hour," Hawkins announced from his seat. Reaching down Anderson tapped in a few commands and opened a COM channel with the marines below.

"Lieutenant Johnson, please report to the bridge immediately," he spoke, before ending the channel. Within minutes the powerful form of First Lieutenant Cain Johnson stepped onto the Bridge and saluted the Captain.

"Sir, Lieutenant Johnson, reporting as ordered, Sir," he said smartly.

Returning the salute Anderson looked over the sensor data, it showed the first ship entering the atmosphere while the second orbited above. "Lieutenant, the Covenant are invading Sigma Octanus IV again. I know it's your home world, so I'm putting you in charge of ground assault. The first vessel is expected to put down near New Cote d'Azur within the next ten minutes. You will lead your troops in and destroy any hostiles, I'll take care of the orbiting forces. Any questions?"

"Sir, why send two ships and only let the smaller one land? It doesn't make sense, Sir."

"Nothing in this god damned war makes sense. Now load up, you have thirty minutes to prep before departure."

"Yes Sir, lookin' forward to it, Sir," Cain replied before walking off the bridge and riding the elevator down.

As he walked Cain felt something slip into his heart like light spearing through the darkness. It was fear mixed with an anger born of desperation; his family, his whole family was on that planet and no Covenant bastard was going to take that from him or so help them.

-

"Ship Master, there is an infidel warship on an intercept course, it will be here within sixty units," a young elite spoke up.

Ship Master Ruis' smirked as he stood upon the elevated control platform of the bridge. Below him elites rushed around to ensure the ship was in perfect working order.

'Good,' Ruis' thought to himself, 'Maybe this cursed mission won't be a total waste.'

"Have they detected us," Ruis' asked the same elite quickly. "Yes sir," the elite replied almost instantly.

'Well there goes the chance of an ambush and quick slaughter' thought Ruis'. "Very well, charge all weapon banks and await my command, Omabi will have to deal with the heretic on his own. Contact him and tell him to report now," Ruis' ordered before moving away to the centre holo-screen. The topography of the planet below his feet moved across the screen in front of him. The planet resembled his home world with a frightening similarity, if not for the alien colours it would be Sangheili. Behind him the purple doors flashed briefly before sliding away to reveal a red armoured elite entering the room. Walking briskly Omabi stood before his Ship Master and bowed his head in respect.

"Father. Why me?" Omabi asked before his father could speak. Ruis' Basamme stared down at his son with almost the same level of hate he had for his youngest son.

"Do you dare to question the Prophets will!" Ruis' whispered in a harsh tone so that only Omabi could hear, "The Prophets send you to reclaim the honour of the Basamme name and you ask why! I was grateful to have even been given the chance. I wonder if you both have bad blood, Domadre never showed any weakness, not in body or mind."

"I am sorry father," Omabi mumbled still keeping his head lowered.

"How many warriors are you taking," Ruis' asked, trying to change the subject to a degree.

"Only six others father, all the best in my legion."

"You have great faith in the Gods," Ruis' said to his son as he smiled.

"I have faith in my comrades," Omabi replied before he knew it. His fathers backhand sent him flying to the floor. The crew on the bridge turned to look at the commotion, but one glance from their commander sent them back to work.

Picking Omabi up by his throat, Ruis' spoke to his son as though the very hatred he had for Trak spilled out between his mandibles. "Don't you ever, ever cheek me youngling. Get out of my site now, you have twenty units to leave this ship and don't come back until that wretch is dead! Or I will have lost two sons to the foul infidels."

Releasing his grip Ruis' let his son fall to the deck before turning his back on him and returning, once more, to the holo-screens. Only this time he didn't take in a thing he saw.

Picking himself up of the floor Omabi lowered his head once more before leaving.

-

The night was motionless, there was no breeze to ruffle the long rice fields, no moon to shine down upon the vast lakes. There was only a silent hum as a small ship landed in a forest clearing. Beyond the tree line lay a small town, the wooden shacks replaced with concrete dwellings over the years that had passed. As the engines powered down the night was returned once more to darkness.

Stepping out from the ship Trak looked into the sky, the sleek form of the Covenant cruiser drifting by overhead. It would not be long now, he thought to himself. Whatever would happen would be over by dawn.

## 16. XVI

Again, another quick, little update. Next chapter is already on its way. Enjoy.

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Reconciled Brother

### Chapter 16 : Brothers Past & Passed - Part II

Rachael raised herself slowly from the small sofa in her small home. Beside her Adam rested his head softly on the arm, his chest rising and falling gently. He was four years old now, Cain had never even seen him, unable to get time off from the UNSC. Stroking his blonde hair Rachael moved over to the armchair and carefully removed the comic book from Andrews' hands. The twins were as different in life as they were in looks. Adam was a boisterous ball, constantly on the go. Andrew was the more mature of the two though, when Rachael looked in his eyes she could tell that he knew his father was gone and might not come back. Yet he never said it, he always held her hand and gave her a kiss everyday.

The small TV was near silent, the volume turned almost the entire way down. All it showed nowadays was the Covenant and the death they brought. Sighing she bent down and picked up Adam, he stirred in her arms murmuring 'just a bit longer mummy', but his protests were in vain. Carrying him to his room she plonked him on the top bunk bed before leaving and returning with Andrew. Turning on the small night light she cast the room in an ocean blue glow, then carefully pulling

the door too, leaving a small crack Rachael walked to her room next door.

Sitting on the double bed Rachael smoothed her hand over the place where Cain used to sleep, a single Polaroid of him resting on the pillow. Removing her clothes she lay back on the back on the bed, giving a final kiss to her husbands' image she turned off the lights and let darkness embrace her.

-

The shouts came in the early hours. Jolting upright in bed Rachael looked around, her eyes becoming accustomed to the gloom. From the boys room another shout broke out. Great Rachael muttered, if it isn't her having nightmares, it's them.

Pulling on a warm nightgown Rachael opened her door and stepped out into the hallway. She stopped dead. A breeze ruffled the bottom of her gown, slowly moving her head to look to the right she saw the front door was no longer there, it lay upon the floor, the hinges still attached.

Running in a blind panic she smashed into her children's room only to see them crouched in the far corner next to the night-light. "Mm m mmmommy," Andrew whimpered raising his finger to point over her shoulder.

Stepping out of the darkness Trak looked down over, there was no emotion on the cold alien face.

"Leave my children alone you monster!" Rachael screamed at the approaching elite.

"Only four years and now I am a monster?" Trak enquired quizzically.

"But but," Rachael stammered looking at the creature before her.

Drawing out his small blade Trak showed the first signs of emotion, a grin flickered across his face, before he lunged forwards.

-

Major Harrison looked over the skies with his binoculars. This planet was not one of the technologically advanced, it did not have the most advanced machines, or mega-metropolises. No, this planet was and always would be a quiet peaceful place for people to come and live.

"But not tonight," Harrison said looking out at the approaching phantoms.

"Sir, a UNSC ship just arrived in the system, they're sending reinforcements sir! They're here to save us," an excitable subordinate announced to the command room.

"Let's just hope they bring a Spartan," Harrison whispered once more to the skies.

-

Omabi's phantom descended quickly through the planets atmosphere, the transponder on his brothers', the heretics' ship guided them towards its resting place. Behind him in the cramped compartments, six of his finest warriors stood waiting, each running over their armour, weapons and other objects to ensure nothing would fail them in battle.

They each also knew of Omabi's position, they knew it was his brother they were after, but Omabi had vowed the final kill must come from him. The silence was oppressing, as though each knew something was going to happen on this mission, yet none spoke out.

"We will set down next to the heretics craft, I want him found quickly. Lok' you take point and search for tracks," Omabi said with his heart half in it.

As the phantom came to a rest above the clearing the side doors swung open to reveal a lush forest. Jumping the three feet from the craft to the ground Omabi waved the group forwards. Behind them the phantom rose and disappeared into the night.

Following a dirt trail on the ground Omabi and his squad were soon on their way towards a small dwelling of humans. He could tell his warriors hungered for blood.

Behind them Aukni', the rear guard, stopped in the darkness. His ears had heard a twig crack and now he was trying to decipher where the noise had come from. As he slowly moved on the spot two hands reached down from the darkened branches above. As one pulled his lower jaw upwards the other drew a small blade across his throat. He died silently, the blood spilling from his open neck. Dragging the body Trak looked ahead where the rest of the search party was still moving. He had circled back as he knew if he was tracked this is where they would start. Wiping his blade on the grass he moved on.

Crouching in the tall grass Trak threw a small rock at the back of one of the elites. He spun looking for the source of the attack. Picking up another stone Trak threw it in the bush opposite him. The elite moved towards it silently, as he readied his plasma rifle Trak leapt out from behind, dragging the dying elite back into the long grass.

Up ahead Omabi stopped and turned around. "Where are Aukni' and Jytia?" he questioned suddenly. The warrior now at the back turned around and squinted into the darkness for his two comrades. Turning back he whispered, "I don't know sir, they were right here."

As he said this a small ball of blue light streamed out from the darkness and landed upon the speaking elites armour. He looked down upon it, by the time his eyes widened in shock the grenade detonated, tearing the elite into a thousand pieces of flesh, bone and metal.

Cursing, Omabi swept low into a crouched position. He was down to four warriors already. Signalling with his hands, two of his men moved off around the flanks to circle behind the attacker, one in either direction.

Renkla moved along the right flank, constantly scanning for any sign of movement. As he reached the point opposite where he had started he looked ahead. There in the distant light he could see the attacker crouched and waiting to attack. Raising his rifle Renkla took aim and let forth a barrage of plasma.

Dropping to the floor in a sudden movement Trak narrowly avoided the plasma which flew over his head and impacted the other flanking warrior. Both had fired and both had hit, only not their intended target. Two more down, two left Trak thought.

Lukna moved forwards, by the light from the town he could make out the form of an elite. Moving closer and closer Lukna looked at the elite, until he was right on top of him. The swinging corpse looked grotesque hanging from the branches, suspended by vine. Lukna immediately recognised the form as Aukni'.

From behind him Trak moved closer. Kicking the young elite in the back of the knees Lukna dropped to the ground, his eyes still on his dead comrade. The blank eyes stared back at him, but Lukna did not worry, soon he would be like that too. The blade came swiftly and Lukna was granted his wish.

Omabi spun on the spot, his entire squad had vanished. Moments ago plasma fire erupted, then silence resumed. What had happened he wondered. Twirling once more Omabi heard a voice he had wanted and dreaded for so long.

"Brother?"

Looking upwards Omabi looked into the face of his brother, hanging from the branches.

"They sent you to kill me?" Trak enquired, his voice trembling.

"You know heretics are taken back to the Holy city to be punished," Omabi said, almost matter-of-factly, but failing, the tremor in his own voice giving him away.

"Are you? Are you going to take me back?" Trak asked quietly, even though he knew the answer.

"My allegiance is to the Covenant first," Omabi said, his voice faltering as he attempted to hold back his emotions.

"You know I cannot go back," Trak replied, looking at his brother with sad eyes.

"Then I must, I must make you. Brother." Omabi stepped back and assumed a crouched fighting stance.

"I will not fight you Omabi," Trak said, dropping from the branches, "You know that."

"Then you will be beaten easily," Omabi replied, seeming to gain his confidence again.

"You leave me no choice then," Trak sighed, taking up the same stance.

Omabi rushed forwards, his first blow to Traks head was immediately followed by a jab to the abdomen. Trak staggered backwards, but regained composure quickly. Omabi came at him again. His first right hook was blocked easily by Trak who returned an upwards blow to Omabi's chin.

"I never wanted to fight you," Trak shouted at his fallen brother who was gingerly getting back to his feet, "But now I will beat you."

Trak shot forwards, his open palm hitting Omabi's chest dead on. Before he could even recover Trak struck again, a blow to the side of the head, a swinging kick against the knees. As Omabi fell to his knees he grabbed one of Trak's feet and swung it upwards. Dropping onto his back Trak tried to roll, but Omabi still held his foot. Kicking with his other foot Trak spun and lashed out at the same time. Omabi's head flew backwards, cracking against the ground. Trak stood slowly and walked over to his brother.

As Trak looked down over his brother the sky suddenly erupted in flame. The Covenant cruiser was falling, plunging through the atmosphere at incredible speed. Trak watched in horror as it fell towards the town, he didn't even notice Omabi kneeling next to him watching with the same look in his eyes.

"Father," Omabi whispered at first, then screamed into the night, turning on Trak his eyes burst alight with flame. Utter hatred blazed in those twin orbs. "You killed our father! DIE!" Pulling his legs back at first Omabi slammed his hoofed feet into Trak's stomach sending him flying back into a tree.

Blood trickling from his mouth Trak felt his ribs snap, pain flaring with each agonising breath. Across from him Omabi stood and stared at his brother. Moving forwards with powerful strides he reached down for Trak and brought him up by his neck, just like his father had done only an hour before it seemed.

Suddenly a crack echoed across the forest. Omabi's shields flickered then died. He fell to the ground, motionless. Dropping next to his brother Trak rolled him over and saw blood gushing from a wound in Omabi's side. Voices could be heard now, alien voices.

Rolling around behind the large tree against which Omabi had thrown him, Trak waited to see who had shot. A voice rang out across the night, it seemed even louder than the gunshot.

"Find the other one, I want 'em both dead and laid out in five minutes."

Trak's heart sank, the man he wanted most of all turned up now, just when he didn't want him! Silently Trak cursed to himself. Slowly turning Trak pulled himself up into the tree branches above him once more. Moving like a cat Trak soon found himself above Cain. As he lay there, looking down over a thick branch Trak suddenly began thinking about all the reasons why he had wanted to kill Cain. The man had only ever had good intentions towards him. Now it was all gone. Trak had lost track of time before the branch began to groan. Quickly looking behind him Trak heard the bark splinter, felt the wood give and then he was falling. Swiftly standing upright Trak took a quick glance at Cain before sprinting off into the dark forest.



Standing there Cain just watched as the elite ran off. It was him, it must have been he thought to himself silently. What other elite would fight another and then leave humans alone? The reasons sounded ludicrous even to him, but Cain didn't care. Suddenly, as his men began to appear from the trees a thought struck Cain, Trak would have been on that ship, he would have been responsible for the death of his family. On the \_Triumphant Glory \_Cain had made a promise and now he had to live up to it. Trak had taken everything from him, not he would do the same.

## 17. XVII

Well this is it, the second from last chapter. The chapter title pretty much sums it up. Also note, I'll be going back through the story and changing bits here and there (mainly spellings etc).

Enjoy.

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Reconciled Brother

Chapter 17 : End Game

The grand trees flew by as Trak ran as fast as he could through the forest. Thorny vines lashed out against his legs, thicker branches splintered against his chest, yet Trak did not falter. His racing body was nothing compared to his mind. He had come here to end what he had started all those years ago, and when the opportunity had arisen he had stumbled and fallen. From the gloom another branch raced forwards, Trak didn't have time to react. It smashed against his chest, breaking clean off the tree. But Trak had been going to fast, his armour, capable of withstanding a hundred shots cracked down the chest plate, a testament to how fast he was running. Ripping the armour from his upper body, Trak breathed deeply, trying to combat the growing pain from within his body. Ahead of him lay the forest, ahead lay the Great Journey. Ahead lay the end that Trak so desperately wanted.

-

"Sir, orders?" a marine questioned, crouching next to his commander, around them a dozen other men all stood with their weapons at the ready. They had already made the grisly discovery of the fallen elites, some men shocked at how many had fallen so quickly.

"Pull the team out, Patterson. Return to the city and search for survivors," Cain replied after a moments thought.

"What about the elite Sir? We should hunt it down." The marine looked slightly shocked at his CO, letting this elite get away.

"I'll track it down, Lieutenant," Cain answered, "This is personal."

"Aye Sir," the marine grinned as he saluted, "happy hunting."

Returning the salute Cain look out into the forest, the path of destruction left by Trak would be easy to follow. "Move out," the marine shouted before leaving Cain alone in the darkness.

The night air was oppressive. The city beyond burned a brilliant orange casting strange shadows throughout the woods that seemed to flicker and dance, creating enemies where there were none, making every corner a danger and a refuge.

Cain moved along the path quickly but quietly. Debris littered the path and crunched lightly as Cain stepped ahead. His eyes roved over the newly created track, they looked for one thing and one thing only.

Cain looked up from the path, he had entered a clearing. Standing upright he quickly glanced over the forest walls, the clearing was at least twenty feet wide, in the middle stood a large flat topped rock. As Cain's eyes locked onto the rock his memory flashed back, suddenly illuminating the dark night. This had been where he first met Trak. Raising his rifle to his shoulder, Cain stepped into the clearing, moving the gun from side to side.

As Cain reached the centre he rested his rifle on the rock and pivoted it to get a better look at the other side of the clearing. A breeze ruffled the trees around the edges and Cain turned slowly to face the demon standing against a backdrop of fire.

"Hello Cain," Trak whispered to the night. As Cain stood he let the rifle hang limply at his side.

"Trak," he merely replied, noting the scar burnt into the naked chest of his brother. Trak raised a clawed hand and ran it over the burnt flesh.

"So they took you back," Cain finally announced, "Tell me, did it hurt when they branded you? Because it hurt me, Trak, when I found out my own brother killed my family! You burnt me to my soul!"

Cain's hands shook, the rifle fell to the ground with a soft thud.

"You think this mark is the only pain I have felt," Trak countered, staring into Cain's eyes, "my father was on that ship Cain. Your fleet blew him out of the sky. My brother was with me, my blood brother, and you killed him in front of me. I watched my brother bleed to death, shot by a coward!"

"From my point of view you two didn't seem to be getting along so great," Cain shouted back, the anger racking every nerve in his body. Without warning he lunged forwards, drawing a six-inch combat knife from his boot. Trak did not react in time, as he stood in shock Cain plunged the blade deep into his chest, centred upon the Mark of Shame. Staggering backwards Trak slowly drew out the blade, his purple blood coating the shiny metal.

"You always did cheat," Trak smirked, staggering backwards. As Cain approached victoriously Trak slipped his own blade from his belt. Flinging it forwards Cain spun just as the blade passed him,

clattering against the stone. He brought his hands up and balled them into fists. "Now we're even," he grinned.

Trak moved towards Cain, putting his arms into a traditional fighting stance. Cain slowly moved clockwise, as did Trak, just waiting for the first blow. Cain shot forwards, a decoy left hook, Trak attempted to block it, but was hit full force by a powerful kick to the right knee. As he fell backwards he kicked out with his left leg, smacking Cain in his groin. After a brief pause Trak spun upwards, his recovered blade palmed in his hand. Moving towards Cain, Trak kicked him over. Cain rolled over once more though and brought his rifle to bear. A flash of emotion appeared on Trak's face as Cain pulled the trigger. The three shot burst tore into Trak's chest, the exit wounds bursting majestically to life on his back. As Trak fell forwards he leaned his body towards Cain in a last ditch attempt. Raising his arms to take the weight Cain caught Trak's shoulders; and a knife to the chest. Pushing Trak over Cain looked at the hilt stuck into his breast bone. A coughing fit came over him, blood trickling down his cheeks. Next to him Trak lay motionless on the ground.

The light from the burning city faded, the screams and roaring fires died down and Cain stared up at a crystal clear sky. The stars twinkled at him as he lay there, life slipping away by each moment.

The view was suddenly interrupted, through the murky fogs Cain saw a familiar face look down at him.

"Sir! Sir, can you hear me. Medic!" Patterson shouted into the trees, his voice seemed very faint. "Sir, listen to me, we found your wife and kids, they were wondering around the outskirts of the town, they say an elite took them, said his name was Trak or something like that and he wanted to make sure they were safe."

Rolling onto his side against the lieutenants' wishes Cain grinned at the elite beside him. "Patterson, pay attention, this elite is to be taken care off very well, do you understand me?"

The marine just sat dumb-founded at his superior. "Sir, are you sure? I mean, this isâ€¦ it's an elite!" he stammered.

"This here is Trak lieutenant, and you WILL make sure he survives, I promised him I would take care of him a long time ago" Cain whispered, before he lapsed into unconsciousness.

-

Trak stirred in his dreams, oh how familiar this feels his mind whispered to itself. The darkness pressed around him, it felt like a snug blanket his mother would pull around him as they sat watching the suns setting on his home world. Subconsciously Trak sighed, life would never be the same. As he moved once more the pain became more evident, his chest felt as though it had been branded once more. Trak recalled the events of his encounter with Cain, how long had passed since then? A night, a day, a week?

But now the darkness was beginning to fall away, his comforting blanket was been ripped away, replaced by cold needles digging away at his flesh. The world beyond reached out and spoke to him, Trak listened yet didn't comprehend. Let darkness come back he pleaded to

his Gods, but every moment he felt reality slipping back into drive.

Trak saw light through his eyelids, the brightness burning his sensitive eyes. Now he could hear the voices properly, the alien tongue quickly deciphered by his mind.

"Tell the general it's waking," one said.

"Ugly bastard," another stated coldly.

"Why the hell would Johnson want this thing kept alive?" another puzzled.

Flexing his mandibles Trak breathed in deeply, the pain was still there, deep in his chest, but nowhere near as bad as after the fight. Now he opened his eyes, the bright medical spotlights shining down upon his face. Raising a hand Trak found his arms restrained at his side. Trak tugged once more but the bonds held tight, great he subconsciously thought, he was a prisoner now. Tilting his head to side, away from the glare of the lights Trak opened his eyes fully and looked around the room. Two marines stood by the only door, their rifles aimed directly at him. A medic was leaning over a desk, doing something Trak couldn't make out.

"Wwwkâ€| water," Trak gasped, trying to form the words properly. The two marines turned to face each other, their looks amusing Trak to no end. The medic though placed a small plastic cup against Trak's mandibles and poured the liquid down slowly, pausing to allow Trak to rest.

"Thank you," Trak replied as the medic walked away. Trak lay his head back against the table and closed his eyes, he was going nowhere soon.

-

Two days had passed and Trak was still bound to the table. The guards changed every few hours, each with differing opinions although the consensus seemed to be that the ugly lump in front of them should be put to death.

The same medic remained throughout though, becoming more trusting towards Trak. As the young woman reached over Trak to take a blood sample he struck. He had been planning this moment since he first woke. He knew he could never be freed, that the humans would want to keep him; for their own purposes.

The nurse screamed as Trak tore his arm from the restraint and wrapped it against her neck. Wrenching his other arm free the two guards aimed their guns at the duo, but couldn't shoot. Whispering to the medic, she reached over and undid the two straps around his ankles. Swinging his feet from the table Trak looked at the two marines.

"Lower your weapons and I will let you all live," he stated matter of factly to the group. They glanced at each other, yet still held firm. "Very well," Trak finished.

He pushed the woman at the two men with all the force he could

muster, she flew violently into the marines as they caught her. Before they could even think of retaliating Trak jumped and grabbed hold of two bars suspended from the ceiling used for curtain rails. Swinging his body forwards he kicked the two men in their chests and sent them sprawling to the ground. As Trak walked forwards and stepped over the two men he looked at the medic and smiled, "Thank you for helping me recover," he said softly before leaving the room and entering the corridor.

-

"Johnson. Johnson, wake the hell up," someone screeched. Rolling over in his slumber Cain was interrupted by a sharp whack to the head. "Jesus Christ," he mumbled, sitting up and rubbing his right cheek.

"Sorry Son, but you didn't wanna' get up," General Harrison said, "Listen Cain, we've known each other since before you joined, I know all about Trak, remember. Why the hell did he turn up here again?"

"Long story," Cain said, sitting on the edge of the bed, "and no I can't fill you in sir," Cain apologised.

"Well it's too late for that, he just did a runner," Harrison sighed.

"What!" Cain stood bolt upright before collapsing back onto the bed.

"Easy son, you ain't goin' no where for a while, that knife damn near killed you, another millimetre and I'd be talking at your eulogy."

"Whatâ€¦| what happened," panted Cain.

"We brought him in like you asked, seemed he didn't like been locked up though," Harrison said sitting on a chair next to the bed, "he injured two guards and scared the hell out of a medic, but nothing serious. Our men chased him into the woods and I've got search patrols out looking for him. Shouldn't be long."

"Call them off," Cain part asked, part ordered.

"And why the hell should I do that?" Harrison enquired.

"You know as well as I do that he isn't an enemy, he took out a whole squad of elites for us sir. I was just fulfilling a promise bringing him here. Just let him go sir, please," Cain implored looking at his commanding officers face, "You know you'd never find him," he finished with a grin.

"You two always were two of a kind," Harrison said with a wide grin, "I'll call my boys off, but any, and I mean any reports of an elite attacking people and he'll be gone quicker than that," said Harrison smacking his hand on the table next to him.

"Affirmative Sir," Cain said, lying back on the bed.

## 18. XVIII

Well, this story is now finished. I'm thinking of writing more, I'm not sure whether to follow on this story or try something new. Thanks to all my readers and especially reviews, you guys are great.

Enjoy.

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Reconciled Brother

Chapter 18 : Reconciled Brother

The morning light broke over the crest of the horizon. A light mist hung in the air and the sound of a hundred different birds filled the forest. Laying upon a branch in the high canopies Trak Basamme looked out over the view and sighed silently.

He had lost everything, his father, his brother, his life with the Covenant and Humans. All he had now were the scars left on him by both sides. Pressing his back against the thick bark Trak traced his fingers over the three small holes in his chest, he knew he had been lucky, the only reason he wasn't dead was because of the humans.

Looking down upon the ground he frowned, they had not pursued him deep into the woods, an act he found troubling. But, resting his head once more, Trak let all thought leave him. He would lay here until the end, the place where his life began, the place where his life had failed. The clearing now seemed more like a curse.

Running his fingers over his leg Trak frowned once more. His blade was gone. Then the realisation started to sink in. He had used the weapon on Cain. Oh why, he shouted angrily at himself mentally. Cain had never had anything but good intentions towards him and this is how he repaid them. Taking Rachael and Cain's children had been an act of desperation; he had heard the phantom chase after him and knew that no one in the town was safe. Now he grinned at himself in a twisted kind of grimace; Cain still had his loving family to go back to. A new emotion swelled up within Trak, one he hadn't felt since his first time at training camp, jealousy. But then, almost as quickly as it rose, the feeling sank back into his soul and Trak was left alone once more.

Putting his head into his hands Trak let out a low moan and lay upon his branch.

-

Cain walked purposefully through the base, as he left the medical wing a marine came running up to him, obviously on orders to follow and assist him. The young soldier didn't look a day over eighteen and had obviously just finished basic.

"Sir, General Harrison ordered me to be your,"

"Escort," Cain cut the man off, he had no time for this. Trak could leave soon. "Listen kid, just go back to your mates and tell the

General I'll be back by sundown. Tell him I have to meet an old friend, he'll understand."

With that Cain left the base, leaving the young soldier standing on the spot, obviously looking uncertain as to what to do.

As Cain moved quickly through the thick forest growth the smouldering ruins of the town could be seen dancing between the trees. Grinning Cain subconsciously thanked Trak for saving his family, he owed him everything now.

Stepping out into the clearing that had been burned into his memory since childhood, Cain stopped and looked around. Slowly moving towards the centre Cain grinned when he heard the all too familiar thump behind him.

"Hello Trak," he said quietly, turning to face his brother. Trak made no motion towards him, his mandibles moving in and out slowly. The scars upon his chest were clear now in the bright light. A great circle of burnt flesh, punctured by three small holes. Cain winced upon seeing the torment his brother had been through in his short life. Reaching into his belt, Cain pulled out a small object.

"I think you left this," he said, tossing it to Trak who caught it effortlessly with his right hand. Turning it to face him Cain saw no emotion, only the last vestiges of a soul and will to survive.

"Err," Cain continued, uncomfortable with the silence, "I thought you should know that the search patrols have been called off. Harrison said you can stay, same conditions as last time." Trak made a noise similar to a snort and turned his back on Cain, slowly moving back to the tree line.

"Wait Trak," Cain pleaded against his brothers back, "What happened to you?" Trak stood silently for a moment, before looking behind him at Cain.

"I grew up," he finally said, almost a whisper.

"We all grew up Trak," Cain replied, "Why did you leave the Covenant and come back here? What happened bro?"

"I AM NOT YOUR BROTHER," Trak exploded slamming his fist into the tree next to him. "I never was and I never can be," he said. "Cain," Trak looked down at his hands searching for the words, "you are a human being and I'm an elite. You have a family to go back to and I have nothing now. It was all taken from me." Glancing up from his hands he looked for the first time into Cain's face. He had stood silently while Trak screamed.

"I'm, I'm sorry Trak," Cain finally replied.

"I can't stay here any more," Trak said as he turned once more to face the trees, "Goodbye, brother."

"Wait, Trak, where will you go? You just said you had nothing, you can't leave again, you may never return," Cain almost shouted as he rushed to stand by his brother. Trak looked at Cain and placed a clawed hand upon his shoulder.

"I don't intend to return," he whispered. Removing his hand Trak walked off into the trees, there shadows casting him in temporary darkness.

"You know you're always welcome on my doorstep," Cain called after him. The shadows stopped, only for an instant, then he was gone. Cain's only brother in life walked away into the abyss.

After a few moments Cain headed back towards the base, a definite droop in his shoulders. Hours later, looking up into the sky Cain saw a tiny speck of darkness upon the golden orange skies.

"Brothers forever," he whispered, following the speck.

-

Trak sat in the cockpit of the human pelican, the second one he had borrowed. Below him the world fell away, soon the blissful skies thinned out to a black canvas, and Trak was left truly alone.

"Brothers forever Cain," Trak whispered to himself.

End  
file.